



IN THE TABLOID

THE MOM
AND POP
OF FANTASY

INSIDE THE TABLOID

NETWORK+
ENVOYS TO
THEIR

IN THE TABLOID

REGISTER TODAY PAGE 20

Independent
Fantasy Football
WIN A TRIP TO THE
1998 WORLD CUP FINAL6,000 heart
attacks a
year from
car fumesNicholas Schoon,
Environment Correspondent

Air pollution caused mainly by road traffic is triggering 6,000 heart attacks in Britain each year, according to medical researchers. Since roughly half of all heart attacks are fatal, the new finding supports the views of a growing number of doctors and scientists that pollution kills several thousand Britons each year.

A team led by Dr Jan Polomiecki at St George's Hospital Medical School in London concluded that one in 50 heart attack victims arriving at London hospitals is there as a result of poor air quality outdoors. Their research is published in the latest issue of *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

He analysed seven years of data from the late 1980s and early 1990s covering nearly 400,000 hospital admissions and levels of five key air pollutants, all produced mainly by traffic in the capital's busy roads and motorways.

The researchers were looking for a link between air quality on any one day and the number of people being rushed to hospital with heart and circulatory problems the next day. They used complex techniques of statistical analysis to probe for any connections.

They found that heart attacks, in which some of heart's muscles are killed by a lack of blood supply, rose in line with the previous day's levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and particulates, microscopic sooty specks. But these linkages between

air pollution and health were found only in the colder months, from October to March, and not during the warmer April to September period. The worst pollution episodes are generally during particularly cold, still periods in winter when freezing air becomes trapped over cities and the concentration of fumes builds up over several days.

But while these laws should find no linkage between heart attacks and rising levels of low level ozone, another important pollutant known to cause discomfort to people with chest illnesses and asthma. Ozone is produced by a chain of chemical reactions which begins with traffic fumes. For high concentrations to build up there has to be little wind and long hours of strong sunshine, so ozone smogs are found only in summer.

The researchers' article says there are now "plausible mechanisms" by which traffic emissions might trigger blood circulation illnesses. "Our results strengthen the case for... a causal link with myocardial infarction [heart attacks]."

Over the past few years, a stream of big statistical studies from Europe, North America and more recently the UK have suggested a link between air pollution, deaths and hospital admissions. It seems that the elderly and those already suffering heart and lung disorders, are most at risk.

The 1990s have seen Britain and the other European Union nations implementing measures to cut pollution from new cars, lorries and buses, under EU smog-busting laws.

The most significant of these

have been compulsory catalytic converters fitted to the exhaust pipes of all new cars. The annual MoT test also checks for levels of carbon monoxide in exhaust fumes. Stricter standards for new cars came into force this year, and in 2000 new vehicles will have to meet a still tougher third stage of standards.

But while these laws should bring about big improvements in air quality, and thereby save thousands of lives, there are powerful countervailing forces.

The number of cars and car usage is rising steadily, and those trends have accelerated with the strong economic recovery. For years to come, millions of older vehicles will not have catalytic converters fitted, produce copious quantities of pollutants and face no annual emissions checks. There are also worries that as cars with "cats" age, the performance of their pollution-cutting equipment falls off sharply.

The Government has forecast that air quality should now have begun improving after deteriorating through the 1980s, partly because of moves to curb traffic fumes and the drastic decline in coal burning by power stations. But it will not be possible for several years to say if things are getting better.

One reason is that a nationwide network of monitoring stations has only been in place for a few years; this makes it difficult to establish a baseline and see trends emerging. Another is that pollution levels depend on the weather and therefore fluctuate markedly from year to year, irrespective of the exact quantities being emitted.

Tory wet: Party leader William Hague about to take the plunge on a water slide during a visit yesterday to Flambards theme park, near Helston, Cornwall. Photograph: Paul Slater/PA



Black actors confuse police trainees

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

Hundreds of police officers are to be given a second chance to take promotion examinations after failing because they were unable to deal with black actors pretending to be traffic wardens

The 13 ethnic minority actors who took part in the national examinations were told last week their role was being axed. But the Home Office announced last night that it was reversing the decision and that the exams using black people would continue.

An organisation representing black officers yesterday said the affair was very worrying and raised wider issues about police attitudes to race.

The controversy follows last year's sergeants' exams which used black actors for the first time – about half the 3,200 tests involved black actors in one exercise. The Police Promotions Examinations Board decided to drop the practice after a psychologist told them officers had performed better when dealing with white actors and that this may be because race was confusing them.

It followed a survey of the previous year's results by an occupational psychologist who found there were "significant differences in performance" by

those candidates who had to deal with black actors and those who had white actors. The board decided that many officers believed the examination was to test equal opportunities skills, rather than their knowledge of road laws.

As a result, the board decided to scrap the results of that section of the exam and give all officers who failed another chance. This will affect about 800 of the officers who failed.

Leroy Logan, of the Black Police Association, said yesterday: "While we agreed that there is some merit in the findings of the psychologist we would argue that the real issue here is the apparent inability of some candidates to relate to black people without seeing colour as the issue."

"If this is happening in the controlled situation of an exam, then how might their perceptions be translated in real operational situations?"

A spokeswoman for the Home Office said: "It was a misguided attempt to standardise the examinations. It is clearly unacceptable. Steps are being taken to reverse the decision and reinstate the ethnic minority

role players." Spokesmen for the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Police Federation welcomed the decision to overturn the move. However, there remains confusion about who authorised the original policy when the Home Office, Federation and Acpo all have members on the board.

The head of the Police Promotions Examinations Unit in Harrogate, Superintendent Glenn Hutton, acknowledged that there had been a "hiccup" in its procedures, but he said it was a misunderstanding about how the exam system worked.

Yes! Yes! Er - what was your name again?

Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

It's the morning after and you have not got a clue where you are or who they are or what you have done. But now forgetful lovers have the perfect excuse – all they have to do is tell their partners: "Sorry, I must have been suffering from recurrent coital amnesia."

It may sound like a state of mind induced by one too many bottles of chardonnay. But, ac-

cording to the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, this medical condition, characterised by sudden and dramatic memory loss after sexual intercourse, is not an uncommon clinical occurrence.

Doctors in a letter to the journal recount the case of a man in his sixties who frequently suffered bouts of amnesia after sex. "During these events he would repeatedly ask questions such as 'What are we doing?' 'What time of year is it?' What

time of day is this?" reported Dr Russell Lane of the West London Neurosciences Centre.

The memory loss lasted for 30 to 60 minutes on each occasion, after which he recovered perfectly except for the fact that he had no memory of intercourse and only the haziest recollection of foreplay.

Although he seemed aware of experiencing difficulties during the amnesia attack, the doctors found his activities during intercourse and after were

"unremarkable". Investigations showed nothing except an irregular brain signal which doctors attributed to migraine.

Recurrent coital amnesia is thought to be one type of a more common condition known as transient global amnesia (TGA), which happens during periods of physical and emotional stress. It is characterised by the sudden development of amnesia usually accompanied by repetitive questioning but without any other alteration in

consciousness or any obvious neurological disturbance such as an epileptic fit.

"The fact that a person can repeatedly experience selective amnesia for sexual intercourse, but otherwise function normally during the amnesia period, raises interesting social and medicolegal considerations," Dr Lane said. Or, as agony aunt Clare Rayner puts it rather more forcefully: "What a glorious new excuse – 'Sorry, I forgot all about it, darling.'"

Camelot
director to
leave after
final bonus

David Lister

David Rigg, the public face of Camelot, operators of the National Lottery, is leaving the company. Mr Rigg, Camelot's director of communications, was criticised as one of the lottery "fat cats" earlier this year after it was revealed his salary package had almost doubled to £333,333.

His total salary package rose by 90 per cent last year – the biggest leap of all the Camelot directors. He is due to pick up around £80,000 in performance-related bonuses on 1 October – two days before he leaves Camelot.

Mr Rigg was a founder board member of Camelot in 1993, and spent many of those early days wooing both journalists and others involved in the lottery good causes, telling them of Camelot's efficiency and ability to deliver.

His public relations skills could not, however, overcome the public distaste when it was revealed that in total, the amount paid out to directors this year rose from £1.67m to £2.23m, while profits slipped from £51.1m to £46.8m.

News of the pay-outs sparked a public outcry, with claims that more cash should be going to the good causes.

Mr Rigg was away on a half-term holiday with his wife and children when the results were leaked.

After a showdown with Culture Secretary Chris Smith, the directors agreed to pay undisclosed sums from future bonus payments into a confidential charity fund.

Announcing Mr Rigg's departure yesterday, Camelot's chief executive Tim Holley said: "However, I believe it is right for me to move on at this stage and seek new challenges for the future."

"David has been one of the architects of the success of the National Lottery and has been an outstanding communications director."

"We are sorry to lose him but wish him well in his future endeavours."

In a statement issued by the company, Mr Rigg said that he felt the time had come to move on.

David Rigg said: "The lottery has played a major part in my life for the last seven years



and has absorbed most of my time for the last four-and-a-half years.

"Working as part of the Camelot team has been both a pleasure and a privilege. I have also, in the vast majority of instances, greatly enjoyed my literally thousands of dealings with the media over this time.

"However, I believe it is right for me to move on at this stage and seek new challenges for the future."

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Silver for Britain
Denise Lewis won Britain's first medal in the athletics World Championships in Athens last night, when she finished second in the heptathlon.

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significant shorts

Hero pilot fights shy of bosses' praise

The airline pilot who safely crash-landed his crippled aircraft with 66 passengers on board was too shy to meet the praise heaped upon him yesterday. Captain John Jones, 40, had just left Manchester airport on his British Regional Airlines flight bound for Ireland when an undercarriage failed, but he told his bosses it was just part of his job.

The aircraft, with a total of 70 people on board, turned back when it was discovered the undercarriage on the left wing would not work. It circled for three hours over the Irish Sea to use up excess fuel before the captain, one of the airline's most experienced pilots, brought it safely down on the tarmac at Manchester in what his bosses described as "a text book example of how to handle the aircraft in the circumstances".

Mike Balhgate, the airline's commercial director, said: "The captain is a very private individual. He believes it was very much an overall combined effort between him and the other crew." Captain Jones, who has been with the airline for 10 years, was speaking to investigators from the Department of Transport's Air Accident Investigation Branch to try to discover the cause of the failure.

Randeep Ramesh

Double murderer to be released

A convicted double murderer is to be released from prison after 22 years protesting his innocence, it was disclosed last night. Reginald Dudley, 72, who was convicted with Robert Maynard in 1977 for the killings of London underworld figures William Moseley and Michael Cornwall, is to be let out of Ford Prison, Sussex, on licence on tomorrow, his solicitor, Andrea Storey, said.

Dudley and Maynard, who remains in jail, have been the subjects of Britain's longest-running miscarriage of justice campaign. Their cases are currently being looked at by the Criminal Cases Review Commission which is considering whether they should be sent back to the Court of Appeal. Moseley's handless and headless body was discovered in 1975. The following year, Cornwall was shot dead. The only evidence against them came from an armed robber who claimed they had admitted the murders while in jail. However, he later admitted lying in order to get a shorter sentence.

'Men in Black' sets box office record



The sci-fi action comedy *Men in Black* has broken British box office records in its opening weekend, makers Columbia Tristar claimed yesterday. The film starring Will Smith (left) and Tommy Lee Jones as men "protecting the Earth from the scum of the universe", took £7,066,748 at the turnstiles up to Sunday night.

That figure beat the previous record holder, *Independence Day*, in which Smith also starred, last summer which made £7,005,905 over the same period. However, Columbia Tristar's figures included Thursday previews – and *Men in Black* opened early at more than 300 screens around the country.

Barclays faces action over pay

Barclays is facing a campaign of industrial action in a "rapidly escalating" dispute over pay. The bank's two unions have agreed to co-ordinate action, which is likely to include an overtime ban and a work-to-rule, after the "collapse" of talks. Barclays turned down a union request to take a dispute over a new performance-related scheme to the conciliation service Acas, arguing that it had already made substantial modifications to its original proposals.

Jim Lowe, assistant secretary of the Banking Insurance and Finance Union (Bifu), complained: "This from a bank that is expected to announce half-yearly profits of more than £1bn later this week." Bifu and the Barclays union UNIFI said that the new pay scheme would reduce the amount of money the bank puts into staff salaries. The two unions have decided to co-ordinate action, although no date has been fixed for it to start.

Man hunted over landlord's death

A former psychiatric patient is being hunted by police after his elderly landlord was found stabbed to death in a burning house. Police took the unusual step of naming unemployed David Edward Roberts, 24, as the man they wish to question about the killing of Joe Osmond, 70. They warned the public to stay clear of Mr Roberts, who was offered a room to rent by Mr Osmond after they met at their local rugby club. The murder inquiry was launched after the emergency services were alerted to a fire at Mr Osmond's two-bedroomed cottage in Salisbury, Wiltshire, where they found his body inside. He had suffered multiple stab wounds.

East 17 star on assault charge



Pop star Brian Harvey appeared in court yesterday at a hearing to decide whether he will stand trial for an alleged assault on a photographer. Harvey, 22, singer with East 17, was mobbed by teenage fans after he arrived for an old-style committal hearing at Bow Street magistrates' court in central London. Harvey (left), from Loughton, Essex, and Stephen Exley, from Walthamstow, east London, are jointly charged with assaulting an Argentinian photographer, Reinaldo Vargas, 43. The offences are alleged to have taken place outside Stringfellow's night club in London's West End. The hearing was adjourned until 7 October.

Study urges lower drinking age

A report commissioned by police into young people's experiences of drink and drugs yesterday advocated lowering the legal age for buying alcohol in pubs from 18 to 16. The controversial study carried out by the University of Wales, Bangor, for North Wales police shows that about 70 per cent of 16-year-olds are drinking already. It suggests one way of taking them off the streets and allowing them to drink in a more controlled environment would be to let them into pubs with identity cards.

Landlords would also have to adopt a tougher attitude on the amounts of alcohol being sold to any individual. But the university researchers also suggest that the age at which teenagers can buy alcohol across the counter at off-licences should be increased.

Bath lines up for lottery funding

An art exhibition featuring a scum line around a bath tub is to get National Lottery funding. Arts Council officials have approved a grant of £4,176 to help the Bristol-based City Projects arts group stage the controversial exhibition. The bath tub will be one of 10 works put on show in November.

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people



Bosom buddies: Television's favourite twentysomethings have secured a bumper pay-day

What's the price of a Friend? About £2.5m, apparently

They may be "there for us when the rain starts to fall" but their jobs are no longer a joke and they are certainly not broke. The cast of *Friends* have just signed a deal for £2.5m per episode.

The contract could make the series, featuring six impossibly hip New Yorkers hanging out in a trendy cafe, the most expensive in television history.

Hollywood trade papers yesterday reported that the comedy's US network has finally agreed to pay £2.5m per show – the previous figure was about £225,000.

This should keep the cast, who threatened to walk out last year after a row over their salaries, happy to be there for each other for at least a few more episodes.

However, since the programme was first aired, casting directors and advertisers have been falling over themselves to sign up the actors, who were all pretty much unknown before *Friends* came along.

Jennifer Aniston, whose role as the spoilt Jewish princess, Rachel, is secondary to her legendary haircut, is currently starring in a couple of television advertisements as well as lining up the film roles.

Her co-stars, Courteney Cox, better known as Monica, the control-freak chef, and Lisa Kudrow, who plays the ditzy masseuse Phoebe, have also landed parts

in films. Cox most recently played a bitch TV reporter in Wes Craven's latest shock-horror movie, *Scream*. Kudrow, who latest role is playing another loveable airhead in *Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion*, is already afraid of being typecast.

As for the boys, David Schwimmer, the lovable paleontologist Ross, Matthew Perry, arguably the cast member who gets the best lines as Chandler, and Matt LeBlanc, who plays the irrepressible but dim-witted Joey, the offers have flooded in.

Schwimmer was the first *Friend* to test the movie waters in *Palmetto* (a flop) but he is now turning his hand to directing, before returning to the other side of the camera in a film with Sir Ian McKellen, no less.

Unfortunately for Le Blanc, life seems to be imitating art as he has been struggling as much as Joey to land a starring role. But he is hoping that will change when he teams up with Gary Oldman for a movie version of *Lost in Space*.

Finally Perry, who has admitted to drug problems, has just netted a cool £1m for the romantic comedy *Food Rush In*. It's a far cry from the days when, as Rachel would say, they were all searching for "one of those job things".

Kate Watson-Smyth

John Simpson spoils for battle on home front



Distinguished BBC war correspondent John Simpson has put himself in the line of fire on the home front, with outspoken attacks on the corporation's director-general, John Birt, former colleague Martin Bell and "good news" fan Martyn Lewis.

Simpson, 53 (right), launched his forthright salvo in the BBC's biggest-selling publication, *Radio Times*, published today.

He joked that, apart from Libya's Gaddafi, it was getting difficult to find a good dictator these days. "You have to visit weird parts of the world to find them – like Television Centre and Broadcasting House."

"The heads of giant corporations can be just as loopy – it's power and the feeling they always right."

Martin Bell, now the independent MP for Tatton, was wrong to crusade for "involved" reporting on his return from Bosnia, Simpson said. "Martin Bell is talking nonsense and he knows it. He was one of the most objective journalists."

He added: "It's not my job to shriek that side A is right and side B is wrong. I'm sick of the 'I'm going to tell you everything about me and what I think' school of journalism. You don't watch the BBC for polemic."

But Simpson also condemned live two-way links from trouble spots and Martyn Lewis's "good news" campaign. "That's so silly."

There's no good news and bad news, just news," he scoffed. It was "amusing" that the Prince of Wales and John Major supported Lewis, he said. "You can't blame them. Whenever you switched on all you saw was another one of their disasters."

He feared the leaked BBC report *Reflecting The World*, which suggested popular presenters like Ulrika Jonsson were needed to make unpopular foreign issues more palatable, was close to the mark. "It's true. That's the trouble. Viewers want bimbos and bimbettes. Who wants to see Martyn Lewis? I don't."

Simpson, who has resigned regularly in the past, does not fear his latest onslaught will have repercussions. "I've been in lots of trouble and that means within the BBC as well as out."

Queen Mother marks 97th year

The Queen Mother celebrated her 97th birthday yesterday by going on an impromptu walkabout among a crowd of more than 1,000 well-wishers, some of whom had camped overnight at Clarence House.

Leaning heavily on a stick, she smiled and waved at the assembled crowd, who sang Happy Birthday, and handed her flowers, cards, chocolates and cuddly toys.

Accompanied by Prince Andrew, she reviewed a march-past by the 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales.

Then, with four generations of the Royal Family gathered at Clarence House for a celebratory lunch, the party appeared at the gates with the Queen and her mother at their head.

Prince William, 15, was given pride of place by his great-grandmother when he was at her side to review the King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery.

And 12-year-old Prince Harry was also present, with his father, the Prince of Wales.

• Jeanne Calment, who at 122 years and five months, was probably the world's oldest person, has died in Arles in southern France. She "slipped away" at 11.15am local time yesterday but was not thought to be suffering any illness.

Born in Arles on February 1875, Madame Calment was regarded as a kind of living national archive. She lived alone until she was 111 before consenting to move into an old people's home.

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British climber's Himalayan ordeal ends

The British mountaineer Alan Hinkes was resting in Islamabad, Pakistan, last night after spending an excruciating seven days with a slipped disc stranded on a Himalayan mountain.

Bizarrely, the specialist who finally diagnosed the injury turned out to have just returned from nine years working in Darlington Memorial Hospital – only 20 miles from where Mr Hinkes grew up, in Northallerton in North Yorkshire. Dr Ritat Zaidi told Mr Hinkes: "I thought I recognised your accent."

He plans to return to Britain next week to rehabilitate the injury which, in another strange touch, was set off when he was eating a chapati about halfway up the mountain. Some of the flour made him sneeze. The muscular strain caused a prolapsed disc which could take up to three months to heal completely.

The climber was yesterday taken by helicopter from the lower slopes of Nanga Parbat, which at 8,128 metres (26,660ft) is one of the 14 mountains in the world over 8,000m. Mr Hinkes had previously climbed eight of the 14, and had intended to set a record by conquering the other six in a single sea-

son. If he can climb all 14, he will become only the sixth person to achieve the feat, and the first native English speaker.

But so far in 1997 Mr Hinkes has only managed one, Lhose, and now fears that it takes too long for his injury to heal that could rule out an attempt this autumn on the two peaks of Annapurna (8,091m) and Dhaulagiri (8,167m).

He used a satellite phone to call Bergbaus, his sponsors on the £70,000 expedition, and to call for a helicopter. But for days, the pilot was unable to reach him, leaving Mr Hinkes stranded at his base camp with shrinking supplies of food and painkillers. "I was having three-hour back spasms," he recalled yesterday.

Eventually, on Sunday, he managed to ignore the pain enough to climb down 700m to 3,350m, just above a glacier which would have made further progress more difficult, hoping it would be easier for a helicopter to reach him. "I got my cook to build a bivouac, with branches from nearby shrubs, and to make a big H with stones on the ground, then just before dawn broke today I called the helicopter

Charles Arthur

briefing

SHOPPING

Rude staff and long queues keep customers dissatisfied

Rude staff and long queues at the checkout are to blame for growing customer dissatisfaction with service in shops, according to a report published today. Overall, the number of people complaining about service in at least one shop they visit has soared from 26 per cent in 1992 to 43 per cent this year.

DIY and electrical goods stores are the worst offenders, followed by shoe and clothes shop, the survey published by the National Consumer Council disclosed.

Places with the most satisfied customers are hairdressers and barbers' shops where service was rated good or very good by 90 per cent of customers – closely followed by chemists.

Supermarkets come third, leapfrogging local grocers and newsagents for the first time, with 86 per cent of customers reporting good service.

Major drugstores cited by shoppers are queuing at checkouts or not enough tills being opened, and staff who are rude and unhelpful or too pushy. Poorly-trained assistants are also a source of irritation – particularly in DIY and electrical goods stores.

The only area of growing customer satisfaction is prices, with fewer shoppers complaining of either high or rising costs now than five years ago.

The survey into shopping trends also disclosed that Britain is not a nation of shopaholics. People visit the shops less now than five years ago – although this does not mean they are spending less.

TECHNOLOGY

The 'thinking' computer decides

A loans company is using a high-tech "intelligent" computer program to help it make instant decisions on applications. It uses neural technology, which tries to mimic the workings of a human brain, to make split-second judgments on individuals.

Neural computers are often called "thinking computers" because of their ability to learn from experience and "best guess" a situation, just as a human can respond to new and changing situations.

The computer, called Decider, is being used by Lloyds Bowmaker Motor Finance, part of the Lloyds TSB group. It is "taught" with historical customer data, it does not have to be programmed with fixed rules or equations and it can automatically extract essential characteristics from previous applicant information.

Decider then makes a decision on whether to accept a loan or not, and gives reasons for its choice. In a trial, when it was pitted against traditional loan scrutiny techniques, Decider was shown, on average, to be 10 per cent more accurate.



ATTITUDES

Young more tolerant towards gays

More than two in five young people in Britain believe that the age of consent for homosexuals should be lowered, according to the findings of a survey on youth attitudes.

The NOP poll of 986 adults aged 16 years and over in England and Wales, however, found that this general increase in tolerance for homosexuality among those aged 16-34 was not reflected among the over-35s. Seventy-two per cent of the general adult population declared themselves to be against any lowering of the age of consent from 18 to 16 years.

Tolerance on the issue of gay sex does not extend to smoking or "alcopops". More than two-thirds of those questioned were in favour of raising the legal age of smoking from the current 16 to 18 years of age. Support for a total ban on alcopops among the under-25s, whilst less overwhelming than among the over-35s, was still around one third of those questioned.

Louise Hancock

LEISURE

news

Ulster urged to grasp second chance

Jojo Moyes

Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, yesterday urged political parties in Ulster not to miss the new opportunity for peace, describing it as "a second chance".

Ms Mowlam, who will meet Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, tomorrow, said that people caught a glimpse of what the future could hold during the first IRA ceasefire which

collapsed with the bombing of the Isle of Dogs in east London in February 1996.

The meeting will be the first between a government minister and Sinn Fein since just before the ending of the 17-month truce. It forms part of preparations for the scheduled entry by republicans to the Stormont talks process next month.

Ms Mowlam told business leaders in Belfast that if she decided by the end of the month

that the ceasefire was genuine, Sinn Fein would have a place at the negotiating table on 15 September. By that time an international commission for arms decommissioning would also be in place. Both British and Irish governments, she insisted, were committed to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations.

Ms Mowlam said that the governments had an opportunity to improve the basis on

which everybody could work together, one that embraced balanced constitutional change more broadly based than the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Politicians, she said, needed to pick up and run with change. "After all, what is there to fear?" she said. "Consent is there as a central and inviolable principle. There isn't going to be any change in Northern Ireland's constitutional status unless a majority here want it. But

if they do want change, we'll support it.

"No one is going to be pushed or bullied or beguiled. Open and honest discussion with all views on the table, is the only sensible and realistic way forward. It threatens no one."

Meanwhile, talks were under way yesterday to try to work out a deal to ensure that this weekend's annual parade by 10,000 Apprentice Boys in Londonderry passes off without trouble.

Representatives of the order, local business leaders and the nationalist Bogside Residents Association attended discussions chaired by the Mayor of Derry, Martin Bradley.

Alistair Simpson, governor of the Apprentice Boys, said after a lengthy meeting that it had been "very constructive". He said that the three sides seemed quite happy with the proposals put forward by the order for Saturday and he was hopeful of a peaceful parade next weekend.

About 100 members of the local Apprentice Boys are due to parade around the ancient city walls, including a contentious quarter-mile stretch above the Bogside, before joining the main Londonderry parade on Saturday.

The Bogside Residents group said it would not protest against the march around the walls if a deal could be struck over "feed-

er" parades by Apprentice Boys in the nationalist villages of Dunloy, Co Antrim and Bellaghy, Co Londonderry as well as along Belfast's nationalist Lower Ormeau Road.

Last year the walls were closed to the marchers on public safety grounds on the orders of the former secretary of state, Sir Patrick Mayhew. The Apprentice Boys finally carried out their march two months late in October.



Ahead of the rest: Liz Taylor at a ball hosted in Venice by Aristotle Onassis

Canadian who clicked with the great and glamorous

Michael Streeter

They are a revealing glimpse of the famous and glamorous of a bygone era. An exhibition of work by the Canadian photographer Roloff Beny provides an insight into the lives of some of the personalities who dominated the cultural stage from the 1950s onwards, including Laurence Olivier, Margo Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev and Coco Chanel. Best known for his interpretations of classical architecture and sculpture, a feature of Beny's rarer portraits were the anecdotes he attached to many of them.

On his portrait of Rex Harrison he describes how he went to the actor's Hollywood home, expecting the shoot to last 10 minutes.

Hours later, after a tour of the villa and several songs from Harrison's wife Rachel Roberts, the photographer ran out of time. "I realised I had a plane to catch and I snapped Rex in his monogrammed slippers."

On a photo of Tennessee Williams, taken in 1958, Beny acknowledged the brilliant dialogue the dramatist wrote, then added: "But in conversation he wandered so, that I can't remember anything he said."

Beny, who died in 1984, referred to the photographs as his "people" archive.

The exhibition, at Christie's, in King Street, London, runs from 11 to 22 August.



Private lives: Rex Harrison, epitome of English suaveness, at ease in his Hollywood mansion

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Suicide MP had made death threat at Commons

Colin Brown and Stephen Goodwin

Friends of the dead Labour MP Gordon McMaster stopped him jumping into the Thames from the terrace of the House of Commons, it emerged last night.

Roger Stott, a close friend of Mr McMaster, who last week gassed himself in his car at home, said the friends at the Commons had persuaded Mr McMaster not to go ahead with his threat to kill himself.

Mr Stott said he could not help blaming himself for failing to do more to prevent the tragedy. "I didn't do enough. I think collectively as MPs we should do something to help MPs like Gordon who are clearly under pressure," he said.

"We need a parliamentary system to help MPs in stress. It crosses all parties and it happened to Ian Mills [a Tory MP who died after heavy drinking]."

Mr McMaster, the MP for Paisley South, left a suicide

note in which he was reported to have condemned two colleagues, Lord Dixon, a former deputy chief whip, and Tommy Graham, MP for the neighbouring seat of Renfrewshire West. Both deny any involvement in a whispering campaign and unsubstantiated smears about him being homosexual and suffering from AIDS.

Mr McMaster asked for a copy to be sent to the Prime Minister and for the letter to be published. Close friends of the MP said it was unlikely that the Government would publish the letter which was clearly written when his mind was disturbed.

The chief whip, Nick Brown, is carrying out an inquiry at the request of the Prime Minister into the allegations contained in the note, but Downing Street sources said it could take some weeks.

The whispering campaign against Mr McMaster, and the hatred within the Paisley Labour Party that lay behind it,

could come under the spotlight if the Crown Office in Edinburgh decides to hold a fatal accident inquiry into the MP's death. Contents of the suicide note might also be made public if such an inquiry were held.

However, it is similar to an inquest in England – are by no means automatic in Scotland and last night official sources were doubtful if one would be ordered.

An investigation by Strathclyde police concluded there were no suspicious circumstances behind the MP's suicide. The police sent a report to the Procurator Fiscal for Paisley, but it would be for his superiors at the Crown Office to decide whether further action should be taken. The police have received no request to pursue the case further or investigate claims of a poison-pen campaign against Mr McMaster.

Fatal accident inquiries are normally ordered when the Crown Office consider issues of public interest are involved, such as the Dunblane shooting or accidents on North Sea oil rigs.

Meanwhile, Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture Minister, came under pressure to speed up a decision on the future use of pesticides which may have played a part in Mr McMaster's decision to commit suicide.

A former professional gardener, Mr McMaster believed he was suffering from the chronic fatigue syndrome ME and that it might have been caused by organophosphates which he used as a pesticide.

Mr McMaster was a supporter of the All Party Group on Organophosphate Pesticides. Its leader, Paul Tyler, wrote to Dr Cunningham calling for an urgent meeting on banning the chemicals. He said:

"I hope you will now agree that our meeting is all the more urgent, if only to ensure that our former colleague's commitment to help the victims of OP poisoning is carried on."

Redwood presses on with the Tory attack on Simon

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Redwood today will ignore the threats of libel action by the Government and challenge ministers to come clean about the benefits that the trade minister, Lord Simon, will make on his £2m BP shares in a Jersey trust.

He will challenge the President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, over her assurances that Lord Simon would not benefit from having his shares in the trust. Mr Redwood said the trade minister would benefit because the company would gain from the arrangement.

Stepping up his campaign over the alleged conflict of interest between Lord Simon's shareholdings and his role as a trade minister, Mr Redwood

also accused Mrs Beckett of misleading the Commons over her replies on Lord Simon's other non-BP shareholdings.

Misleading the House is a sackable offence under the revised ministerial code of practice issued by the Government. Mr Redwood accused Mrs Beckett of giving assurances on 23 July that Lord Simon had transferred the Grand Met holdings worth an estimated £14,000 into a blind trust, but his name was still on the share holding last Friday.

A spokesman for the Department of Trade and Industry rejected the charge, insisting that Lord Simon had signed for the shares to be transferred into the blind trust, as Mrs Beckett had informed the House and there were delays in the procedure.

Mr Redwood is determined

to keep up the pressure on the Government, in spite of misgivings among some senior Tory MPs and peers.

One former Cabinet minister is upset at the style of the attack on Lord Simon, and there have been rumblings of discontent in the House of Lords among Tory peers at the pursuit of Lord Simon, one of Britain's top businessmen, by the Conservatives in the Commons.

But William Hague, the Tory leader, who led the attack in the House last Wednesday, is backing Mr Redwood and has ordered the Tory ranks in the Commons and the Lords to fall into line.

Lord Parkinson, chairman of the Conservative Party, also appeared uncomfortable when he joined in the attack on the former chairman of BP last week. Lord Parkinson denied he was joining a "witch hunt" against Lord Simon.

Sussex mail

Lord Simon said he had a "thick skin" and will not resign, but the former chairman of BP may feel that in spite of the support he is getting from Tony Blair, the criticism is making his position untenable.

John Bercow, Tory MP for Buckingham, last night wrote to Peter Sutherland, chairman of the compensation committee at BP, questioning Lord Simon's eligibility for his £2m shares.

"My understanding is that it is normal practice for staff who retire or who leave without going to another job to be eligible to participate in such plans."

"However, I did not think that it was normal for staff leaving to take another job still to receive benefits from their former company even if those benefits related to prior years."



Light fantastic: Sunset on Mars, snapped by the Sojourner rover (below), carried to Mars a month ago and which now faces the ultimate test as its battery runs down and it is buffeted by dust storms

Photograph: Popperfoto

Has the Sun finally set on Sojourner's roving trip around the Red Planet?

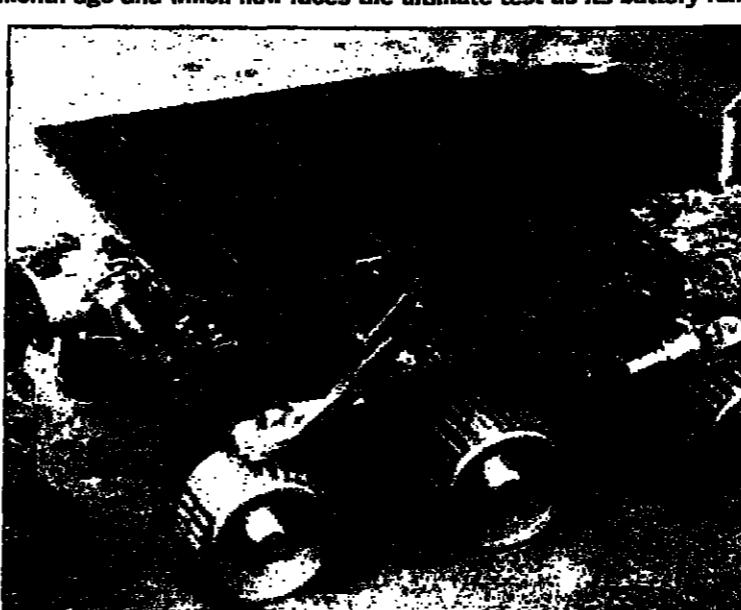
Charles Arthur
Science Editor

It has survived four times longer than its designers expected, but now things are really going to get tough for the *Sojourner* rover on Mars. After four weeks of working non-stop seven days a week, its badly depleted battery will now at times be recharged from solar power, and it will effectively have to shut down overnight.

Though its controlling scientists are delighted with its work, and expect it could continue for a long time, in a few weeks the rover will face its toughest test since arriving on 4 July. In autumn, huge dust storms, with winds that could exceed 160km/h and which can last weeks or months, start.

That will limit the scientific work the rover, about the size of a microwave oven, can do. But scientists at the NASA US space agency have already said they are satisfied with the mission, which began when the *Pathfinder* crash-landed into a dried-up river valley near the Martian equator four weeks ago after an eight-month journey.

Matthew Golombek, one of the



Pathfinder project scientist, said that so far the mission has achieved all its scheduled scientific and engineering goals. The team still plans for *Sojourner* to do spectroscopic examinations of a number of other rocks in the immediate vicinity of the lander. But last night the team at mission control in

Pasadena were waiting to see whether a two-day rest, the first weekend off *Sojourner* has had, had succeeded in fully recharging its batteries.

The dust-filled atmosphere and swings in temperature, which ranges from a high of -12C during the day to -76C at night, have made it more difficult to keep the battery charged.

Initially, NASA had expected the *Sojourner*'s batteries might survive for just a week before the charge-discharge cycle would become unsustainable.

But it has kept going for much longer, performing spectrometer studies to establish the composition of rocks that the scientists have dubbed Shark, Half Dome and Wedge.

The lander has been sending back increasingly high-quality pictures and data of the Martian sunrise and sunset.

The spectacular images have come from a growing amount of data, with roughly 50 megabytes, equivalent to that stored on nearly 40 floppy disks, sent over the millions of miles through space from the nearest planet.

The dawn images revealed pale pink sunrises and clouds floating over

head, with reddish tints caused by Martian dust, composed of oxidized iron-like rust, which is present in the atmosphere. Frozen water-ice clouds are evident in the Martian sky during the early-morning hours, but evaporate once temperatures rise.

"We expect late-night and early-morning clouds, but we expect those clouds will burn off fairly rapidly with sunrise, giving way to a dusty Martian day," said Robert Haberle of NASA. The sunset images showed a sky darkening to salmon-coloured hues.

Although there has not been much variation in these weather conditions since *Pathfinder* arrived, they are expected to begin changing in about a month, as the Martian autumn arrives.

One image which has intrigued observers is that of a shiny object about 1,200m from the lander. But salvaging ufoologists were firmly put off by Michael Malin, a participating scientist. He said the object is about the same dimensions as *Pathfinder*, and is probably its discarded back-shell, which separated just before the space-craft landed.

Tories attack Labour's charade of spin

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Downing Street "spin doctors" were accused last night of leaking the MI6 inquiry of Chris Patten and the "reprieve" for the royal yacht *Briannia* as a smokescreen to cover for a series of blows to Labour's image, including Robin Cook's affair with his secretary.

The Shadow Home Secretary, Sir Brian Mawhinney, accused the Prime Minister's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, and Peter Mandelson, the duty minister during the holiday period, of manipulating the press to stop the stink being taken off celebrations for Labour's first 100 days in office.

Sir Brian, the former Tory party chairman, alleged that the Downing Street information machine used press briefings about *Briannia* and the MI6 inquiry to take attention away from the series of blows to Labour's image.

He claimed that Downing Street feared the weekend newspapers would be dominated by the break-up of the Foreign Secretary's marriage, and that it would be damaging for the Government coming on top of the allegations against Labour figures in a suicide note by the Scottish MP Gordon McMaster, and the party's defeat in the Uxbridge by-election.

Downing Street was aware last week that details of Mr Cook's relationship with his secretary were about to break in the press on Sunday. Sir Brian said they used the briefings to stop the public coming

to terms with the tarnished image of Labour in office.

"Robin Cook has been in the news this weekend and it is understandable they would want to deflect attention away from Mr Cook's private activities. That is the same Mr Cook who has been lecturing us on high ethical standards from this Labour government - we now know what new Labour ethics are starting to amount to," Sir Brian said on BBC radio.

"I think there is media manipulation going on precisely to deflect attention away from the Uxbridge by-election defeat, from the difficulties in the private lives of ministers, and the problems of Lord Simon, and the suspension of the Labour Party in Doncaster. All of these

are stories which had been related to the Conservative Party a few months ago would have been splashed from the top of the news to the bottom of the news, day in and day out."

Mr Mandelson, Minister Without Portfolio, is due to host

a press conference on Friday with John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, at Labour's Millbank campaign headquarters, and the Tories believe Downing Street feared it would be tarnished.

Defence ministers had no

knowledge of the so-called "reprieve" for the royal yacht until they read it in the Sunday newspapers. They were dismayed by reports of a plan to carry out a £50m refit and feared they were being "bounced" into the decision and, as reported exclusively in yesterday's *Independent*, angrily denied that any decision had been taken.

Downing Street yesterday confirmed that the refit was merely one of the options, although Mr Mandelson had ap-

peared on Sunday to give it his

backing.

In a further unusual develop-

ment, Downing Street yes-

terday also said police had not

been called into the inquiry into

the allegations surrounding Mr

Patten, leaving the threat of

prosecution of the former Gov-

ernor of Hong Kong, as re-

ported in Sunday newspapers,

looking overstated.

The Sunday newspapers

were briefed that MI6 was

involved in investigating a possible breach of

the Official Secrets Act involv-

ing Mr Patten. The Foreign Of-

ice refused to comment, but

Downing Street sources freely

confirmed the reports were

true and Mr Mandelson con-

firmed the existence of an MI6

inquiry on BBC radio.

The briefing was seen by the Tories as confirmation of the

way the party machine has

taken over No 10 press office

since Mr Mandelson and Mr

Campbell arrived. They have

merged the briefings on gov-

ernment and party business,

and are keeping a check on the

other press offices around

Whitehall. It has coincided with

the departure of at least three

chief press officers, which some

civil servants see as further evi-

dence of Downing Street taking

a grip of the government infor-

mation machine around

Whitehall.

The first to go was Jill Rutter,

who left the Treasury last

week after clashes with the spe-

cial political advisers to the

Chancellor, complaining it was

like Princess Diana, with "three

in a marriage". Andy Wood,

chief press officer at the North-

ern Ireland Office for 14 years,

stepped down and went on

leave last Thursday.

It was also announced that

Liz Drummond, chief press of-

ficer at the Scottish Office, is

leaving next month, when the

party and government machines

will be campaigning for a "yes"

vote in the referendums in

Scotland and Wales.

The press officers are said to

have gone amicably but civil ser-

vants have described it as

being like "a night of the long

knives". Downing Street under

John Major was forbidden to

brief on party business. His

last press secretary, Jonathan

Haslam, a career civil servant,

was moved after the election to

the Department of Education and

Employment as director of

Cook's estranged wife puts on brave face

Kim Sengupta

Media fascination with the extra-marital affair of Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, showed no signs of fading yesterday as sympathy grew for his estranged wife.

Dr Margaret Cook broke her silence over her husband's liaison with his Commons secretary, Gaynor Regan, by refusing to be bitter in public and stressing that he was a good MP and minister.

In a brief statement she said: "Whatever my husband's private life may have been, he has always been a very good Member of Parliament and is a very

good Foreign Secretary. These are the only matters of concern to the general public."

But friends and neighbours say Dr Cook, a consultant haematologist, is "devastated" after two attempts in the past year to persuade her husband to repair the damaged marriage.

It was revealed that Mr Cook had planned a riding holiday with his wife in the US state of Montana which he only cancelled because of the impending exposure of his affair.

In a brief statement she said: "Let's face it, he only told her the marriage was over last Friday, when he knew the story was about to break. Until then, he

was preparing to go on holiday with her. He was going to fly out on Saturday. She feels publicly humiliated."

Dr Cook, 50, first found out about the affair last summer, said friends. She pleaded with her husband to end it and try to salvage the marriage.

The couple agreed to "work things out". But at Christmas he returned home and admitted he was still continuing with the affair.

Even then, friends claim, Dr Cook asked her to try again, and he agreed. Thinking she had not been with him enough in his professional life, she went with him to Hong Kong for the han-

doe. But last Friday, Mr Cook told her that the *New York Times* was preparing to publish the story of his affair, and the marriage was over.

It also emerged yesterday that Mr Cook and Ms Regan, who is divorced, went to extraordinary lengths to avoid detection. According to reports, she would go into the flat that she shared with Mr Cook in Pimlico, south-west London, and apparently sit in darkness, sometimes for hours, to make it appear unoccupied, until he arrived.

In the morning, carrying a black binbag as though he was putting out the rubbish, Mr

Cook would feed the parking meter beside Ms Regan's Renault Clio. He even, it is alleged, took counter-surveillance measures to ensure his Special Branch bodyguards did not run

tragedy" of the marriage split, but party spokesmen have stressed that unlike John Major, new Labour has never made a big issue of "family values" or attempted to campaign on a "back to basics" platform.

One of Labour's female MPs said: "There is a lot of sympathy for Robin Cook's wife and a feeling he has treated her rather badly. This has apparently been going on for at least a year, and what came out shows they [Mr Cook and Ms Regan] made a lot of efforts to hide their affair."

"As a woman, I feel quite strongly about this and I know so do some of my colleagues".

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Russia offered nought for its comfort

Yeltsin's new roubles look suspiciously like the old ones, less a few zeros

Helen Womack
Moscow

Success in the fight against inflation had made possible a reform which would relieve Russians of the need to carry wads of roubles to make the simplest purchases, President Boris Yeltsin said yesterday.

Showing he had learnt from past mistakes, when such reforms caused panic and amounted to a confiscation of savings, he gave five months' notice of the change and said that even after new rouble notes were introduced on 1 January the old ones would be valid until 2002.

"Today we reliably control money circulation and control inflation," he said in an address to the nation as he ended his summer holiday and prepared to resume work in Moscow today. "The prices of basic goods are practically stable. That is why we made the decision to conduct the money reform." Thanks to a tight budgetary policy on which reformers have insisted and in spite of howls of protest from the Communist opposition, Russia has seen a miracle over inflation, which rocketed when prices were first freed in 1992 until 1996, when it fell to 22 per cent. This year it is 12 per cent.

Under the reform, one new rouble will be worth 1,000 old ones. Until the end of 1998 shoppers can still use old notes, simply knocking off three noughts. For another three full years after that the old notes will be



Cashing in: An old note, to be replaced gradually by 2002, to avert a repeat of the panic which often attended monetary reform in the past

Photograph: Reuters

accepted for exchange by the banks. "Nobody will lose anything as a result of this reform," Mr Yeltsin said. "Nobody's interests will be harmed. This reform will not be a confiscation." Russians have not forgotten the summer of 1993, when the government announced it was withdrawing certain denominations of the rouble and gave the population only a few days to change their money. Pensioners had heart attacks in the

huge queues which built up outside banks and many, unable to make the transaction in time, lost their life's savings.

This time the more competent hands of Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, the new reformers now surrounding Mr Yeltsin, are evident. "We will gradually replace the old money with new," said the President. "The standard unit will be one rouble. It will be easier, more familiar,

without all the extra zeros. New zeros will never again appear on our banknotes."

Geoff Winestock, editor of the *Moscow Times* and an expert on the economy, said the reform was largely cosmetic, designed to make Russians feel they had a real currency instead of Monopoly money. At present, they must carry a sackful of cash just to buy bread at 2,500 rubles a loaf or vodka at 18,000; the

rouble has limited convertibility at a rate of 5,800 to one US dollar.

"Everything depends on how the government runs the economy from now on," said Mr Winestock. "After what Mr Yeltsin has said, it will be very embarrassing for them to have to add more zeros to the rouble, so in a sense this is a bit more than a public-relations exercise. It is a way of forcing themselves to be honest."

Overall, the economy is still not

healthy. The pension backlog has been cleared but the government is having to auction state property to meet obligations to the army and the massed ranks of unpaid doctors, teachers and other public workers. Compared with Soviet times, Russian shops are bursting with goods to satisfy the consumer but they are mainly imports. Domestic industry is on its knees and unemployment is far higher than statistics show.



Money madness

The Russian government is by no means the first to try the trick of knocking off a few zeros, writes Margaret Reger. Brazil, Argentina, Yugoslavia and many others confronted with hyperinflation have tried the same tactic. In an effort to curb inflation, the Reichsbank in Weimar Germany issued a new mark - each one worth a trillion old marks - to save Germans from taking a wheelbarrow of money to the shops. In November 1923 a loaf of bread cost over 200 billion marks; a construction worker was paid 3 trillion marks a day. The world's worst inflation occurred in Hungary in 1946 when the 1931 gold pengo was valued at 130 million trillion paper pengos. Notes were issued for "egymilliard billion" - 10 with 21 noughts after it - on 3 June and withdrawn on 11 July.

significant shorts

EU raises stakes in row over Bosnian integration

Britain and its main European partners stepped up pressure for a real peace in Bosnia by suspending contacts with Bosnian embassies, because of the failure of the Muslim-Serb-Croat presidency in Sarajevo to appoint new ambassadors to their capitals. A week after visiting Bosnia to deliver a scolding for slow progress on the Dayton accords, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said he was suspending contact with Mugdah Pasic, the Bosnian chargé d'affaires in London. He is also refusing to approve a new ambassador, because it has not been cleared by the joint presidency by 1 August deadline set by Nato foreign ministers in May. Similar steps are being taken by France and Germany. The ministers have set deadlines for new laws on citizenship and passports by 15 August, re-establishment of a joint civil aviation authority by 21 August, and a common flag by 1 September.

Rupert Cornwell - London

India mystifies UK university

A British university said it was surprised to learn an Indian court had ordered it to stop awarding degrees in India - something it has never done. "It's a very strange legal system that can grant an injunction against somebody about something they're not doing," said Vanessa Bridge, spokeswoman for the University of Leeds. Its name cropped up in a temporary court order in Madras seeking to stop foreign schools holding classes, collecting fees or operating in India. AP - London

SA hit-men granted amnesty

A former South African police hit-squad leader was granted amnesty from prosecution for the murder of an anti-apartheid lawyer, Dirk Coetzee and two accomplices, David Tshikalanga and Almond Nofomela, were amnestied by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the stabbing of the lawyer Griffiths Mxenge in 1981. The commission said they had acted on orders of senior officers.

Reuters - Johannesburg

German flood bombshell

German soldiers reinforcing dikes along the Oder river were to remove four Second World War bombs. The find halted construction of a levee behind the weakened main dike at Reitwein. AP - Frankfurt an der Oder

Oldest person, 122, dies

Jeanne Calment, who credited olive oil and port for making her the world's oldest person, died aged 122 in Arles. Though blind, nearly deaf and in a wheelchair, she remained spirited and mentally sharp to the end. On her 121st birthday she released a CD, *Time's Mistress*, on which she reminisced to rap. AP - Arles

French feel strain of colonial legacy

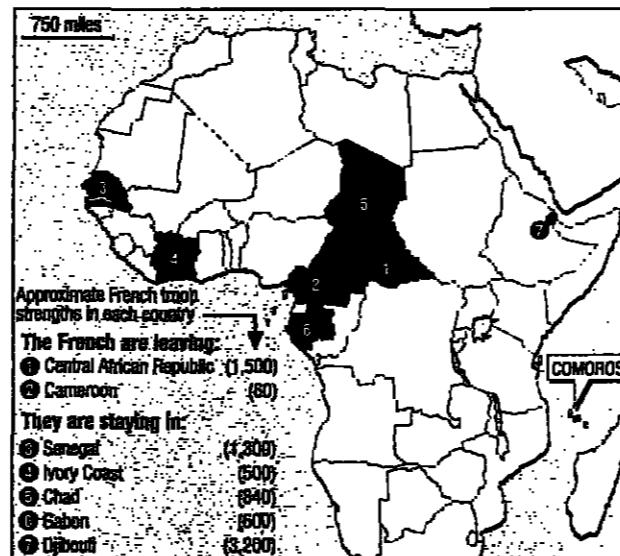
Military presence reduced in Africa

Paris — The French government confirmed yesterday that it intended to reduce and rationalise its military presence in Africa, writes John Lichfield.

Alain Richard, the minister of defence, returning from a three-nation African tour, said the permanent French commitment would be reduced from seven bases to five and from 8,100 men to 6,000.

The previous centre-right government had been considering a similar retrenchment, partly for financial reasons but also as part of a less interventionist approach to the politics of its former colonies.

There has been speculation that the new Socialist-led government wanted to go further and faster, provoking arguments with President Jacques Chirac. But Mr Richard told the newspaper *Liberation* yesterday that the changes had the "full agree-



ment" of the President.

He said the intention was to increase the mobility of the French troops available for African operations, allowing France to "do the same with less". The five main bases would be in Senegal, Gabon, Chad, Ivory Coast and in Djibouti (party covering the Middle East). Bases in Cameroon and Central Africa would close, but a small contingent could remain at the airport at Bangui, the Central African capital, to maintain a bridgehead for possible future French

operations. Although this is far from a complete abandonment of France's political and military role in Africa, it does reflect a new approach and a recognition of new realities.

Mr Richard hinted, without stating directly, that previous French policy had been based on a willingness to take sides in internal political quarrels.

In future, he said, the intention would be to come to the aid of threatened French citizens, to help "stabilise" Africa but not to "arbitrate between rival forces".

John Lichfield Paris

After 21 years of independence, the tiny Indian Ocean island of Anjouan has had enough. It wants, once again, to be part of France and, especially, part of the French welfare system.

More than 7,000 people marched through the capital at the weekend carrying the tricolour and a portrait of President Jacques Chirac. After throwing few stones at the gendarmerie headquarters, their leaders declared independence from the Comoros group and begged Paris to "hear their cries of distress".

The Comoros government dismissed their pleas but so did France. Paris maintains excellent relations with most of its former colonies and does not want to encourage the disintegration of former colonial boundaries.

It is unlikely to want to take over responsibility for an impoverished, overcrowded island (250,000 people in an area the size of the Isle of Wight, with a annual average income per head of about £300). The inhabitants — Les Anjouanais — look enviously at the similar-sized island of Mayotte, 60 miles to the south-east, which refused independence in a referendum in 1974. Mayotte, as part of France, has a

higher standard of living, free education, a minimum wage, family allowances and social security. The separatists say Anjouan has been "ignored and humiliated" in the last two decades by successive regimes in the capital Moroni, on the north-west.

The dispute sounds like the plot for an Evelyn Waugh novel. But it has its darker side.

Although the weekend protest passed off without injury, Comoros soldiers fired on a similar demonstration in March, killing one person and injuring a dozen. There were also violent confrontations leading to two deaths, when thousands of Anjouanais poured onto the streets on 14 July to celebrate the French national day. Inhabitants of the third, and smallest, inhabited island in the group, Moheli, have also started to agitate to be returned to France.

The French foreign ministry

has made it clear that it has no interest in regaining these scraps of empire, formerly separate Arab-controlled emirates annexed by France in 1912. France, the ministry said, remains committed to the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of the Comoros. It hopes that, in this internal Comoran affair, a spirit of negotiation will prevail".

The President of the Comoros, Mohamed Taki Abdoullah, has recently taken a conciliatory line, offering the smaller islands greater autonomy and an opportunity to draw up a short-list from which their governors would be chosen. But the Andouan revolt, led by Abdallah Ibrahim, 71, has gathered considerable popular support in the last four months.

In the referendums held on the islands in December 1974, Andouan voted overwhelmingly for independence as part of the Comoros Republic. The count was 99.92 per cent in favour of separation from France, with only 44 voters against. Mayotte, with a population of only 94,000, voted 64 per cent to remain as a French territory. Since then, Mr Ibrahim claims, the smaller islands have been starved of whatever economic developments have occurred in the coup-haunted Comoros.

Civilians fall casualty to shattered truce

Robert Fisk Beirut

It was accompanied by all the usual clichés. An operation of "surgical precision", every care taken for civilian life, "well within the parameters of the April 1996 truce" understanding".

That is how the commander of the Golani Brigade put it yesterday after his men had returned from their fire-fight at the small Lebanese village of Kfour, north of their occupation zone.

And it is true that at least five Hizbullah

guerrillas were killed and another two wounded.

Unfortunately for the mangled south Lebanese ceasefire, however, three civilians were wounded in Kfour and the fighting took place around the village; the wounding of civilians and firing into villages are both banned under the terms of the ceasefire agreement.

A pitched battle had begun in the early hours after Israeli troops had been flown by helicopter to a location close to Kfour, north of their occupation zone.

And it is true that at least five Hizbullah

men. When they retreated back to their helicopters, the Israelis laid booby-trap mines behind them — into which the five Hizbullah men blithely walked once the Israelis had flown away.

In military terms, it was indeed a coup for the Israelis. The Hizbullah have been exacting a fearful toll on Israeli occupation soldiers inside Lebanon and the dead included Hussein Kassir, the local Hizbullah commander. He and his guerrillas, according to Colonel Eretz, the Golani commander, had "Golani blood on

their hands". Which may be true. But it is now only a matter of time before a further attack will be made on Golani soldiers in Lebanon now that they have obligingly let the Hizbullah know which Israeli unit to revenge themselves upon. The Lebanese authorities are already drafting their next complaint to the five-power ceasefire committee — whose chairmen have been pleading for more restraint in southern Lebanon — and the truce is just a little more tattered.

■ Israel arrested 29 Palestinians early yesterday in a sweep of the West Bank, as part of a strike to weaken Islamic militants after a twin suicide bombing took 15 lives in Jerusalem last week. Israel also stepped up demolition of houses built without permits by east Jerusalem Arabs, razing four, AP reports.

Since Wednesday's bombing, Israel has arrested 145 Palestinians, imposed tight travel restrictions on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and suspended talks with the Palestinians that had just resumed after a four-month break.

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Sir Hepi
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Heuheu

High stakes in Korea, and rewards to match

The Hermit Kingdom" is the convenient cliché for North Korea, the last remaining country in the world where undiluted Stalinism still reigns. It implies a distant, mysterious place that hides itself away from the world – and perhaps isn't of much consequence for the rest of the world. It may be a secret and secretive place, but the crumbling of this Cold War enclave is of enormous importance.

We know a little – a very little – about what is going on in North Korea. We know that there is famine, because successive harvests have failed. Two years of floods were followed by a year of drought. Doctrinaire mismanagement had already created an economic disaster; now there is a humanitarian catastrophe as well. People are starving to death, probably in large numbers. The only reason that this has not aroused more interest is that television cameras are not thick on the ground in North Korea. It is a reclusive, authoritarian state, and the scale of the crisis is hard to judge. Western journalists are not, officially, allowed in, though they do sneak in from time to time.

We also know that, after the death of the long-time dictator Kim Il-Sung, there is political instability. The transition to Kim Jong-Il, his son, is slowly proceeding, but in the interim there are indications that all is not well. Insta-

bility has once more raised fears of conflict on the peninsula, as a dying regime lashes out. There are two million men under arms on either side of the demilitarised zone that divides North and South; it is a place where war has been an ever-present possibility for four decades.

The good news is that talks start today which could lead to a peace treaty that would at last end the enmity between the two Koreas, and replace the fragile ceasefire that has existed since 1953. The bad news is that we know very little about the intentions and capabilities of North Korea, a state more isolated than any other in the world.

We have more at stake in this than you might imagine. British soldiers fought and died for Korea 40 years ago; if there were to be another war there, then it is more than likely that Britain would again offer troops. The reason is simple. South Korea, the capitalist and democratic part of the peninsula, is of critical importance for the West as a trading partner, investor, and strategic ally in the region. We have a lot tied up in Korea.

The fact that Korea is not understood, not known in Britain should be a source of regret. It is 200 years since the first contacts between Britain and the Koreans, and both sides are celebrating it this year through cultural events and exhibitions. These have

made little public impact, partly because people think of the Koreans as a rather strange and distant nation, very alien from our own culture. In fact, the Koreans are a rather jolly bunch, and it is a shame that more people do not know that. Perhaps most importantly, we do a lot of business with South Korea: British firms have recorded huge export growth there over the past few years, and businesses like Hyundai, Daewoo, Samsung and LG (Lucky Goldstar) have brought jobs and investment to every part of Britain.

Historically, it has been a reclusive



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Conflict would threaten not just South Korea, but the fragile peace in East Asia. It would draw in America, China, Japan, and perhaps Russia as well. North Korea may be an economic disaster but it is well armed, and probably has access to at least one nuclear device as well as chemical and biological weapons.

But a lasting settlement in the Korean peninsula also has implications. It may well mean that South Korea draws yet closer to China, and perhaps further away from the US, which has had troops in the South since 1953. It could, eventually, lead to the re-emergence of a united Korea, something that would have implications for Asia similar to those of a united Germany for Europe – a redrawing of the Cold War map.

That is years away. What we can hope for, at the moment, is an easing of tensions; and some help for those in North Korea who have suffered under one of the world's harshest tyrannies. Right now, Britain's position ought to be very clear: we have a powerful self-interest, as well as a humanitarian interest, in ensuring that the Korean peninsula remains relatively stable, while moving towards a peaceful resolution of the half-century division that has so badly hurt the population of the North. We cannot and should not do this by force of arms, or indeed any force; but we can do it by showing that

we are willing and able to help the population of the North, and that its interest lies in opening up to that aid, both culturally and economically. Long task, you might say – but very high reward, if we get it right.

97 reasons to be cheerful

The *Independent* has long kept a certain distance in reporting the trivia of royal life, whether it be the shooting skill of the heir to the throne, or the morals of one or another of Her Majesty's children or children-in-law. All these are, in the end, passing fancies, which, though they are of enormous significance in the lives of the people involved, make little or no difference to you, or to us.

But it is hard to let pass without any comment at all the arrival of The Queen Mother at the fine age of 97. Living to such an age as a cheerfully fulfilled human being – nay, merely *compos mentis* – is a wonderful achievement, to be celebrated regardless of social status. Yesterday died, in France, the oldest person in the world, aged past 120. The rest of us can only look on in envy, and admire the attainment of such a long and rich life.

Stress did not cause Gulf war illnesses

Sir: Gulf war illnesses, of which there are many, have not been blamed on "everything from flea collars to sheep dip", as Elaine Showalter asserts ("Gulf War Syndrome: all in the mind's eye", 2 August). The chemicals used in such products have, however, been implicated in some of the many illnesses reported by Gulf war service and civilian personnel.

Governments and their scientific advisors worldwide have often accidentally or deliberately suppressed information or misled victims and their families about occupational disease recognition, diagnosis and exposure facts. This has been particularly the case for occupational hazards faced by military personnel. The evidence we have already about the Gulf war indicates what can at best be described as past government "errors" about what chemicals military personnel used or were exposed to, whether they were monitored effectively and appropriately and for how long.

There is plenty of evidence showing that a range of organophosphates cause neurological damage. There is some evidence too that these OPs can cause both neuropsychological and neuropsychiatric damage, sometimes at low levels. There is good evidence that certain OPs may be more damaging if mixed together or with some prophylactic drugs than on their own.

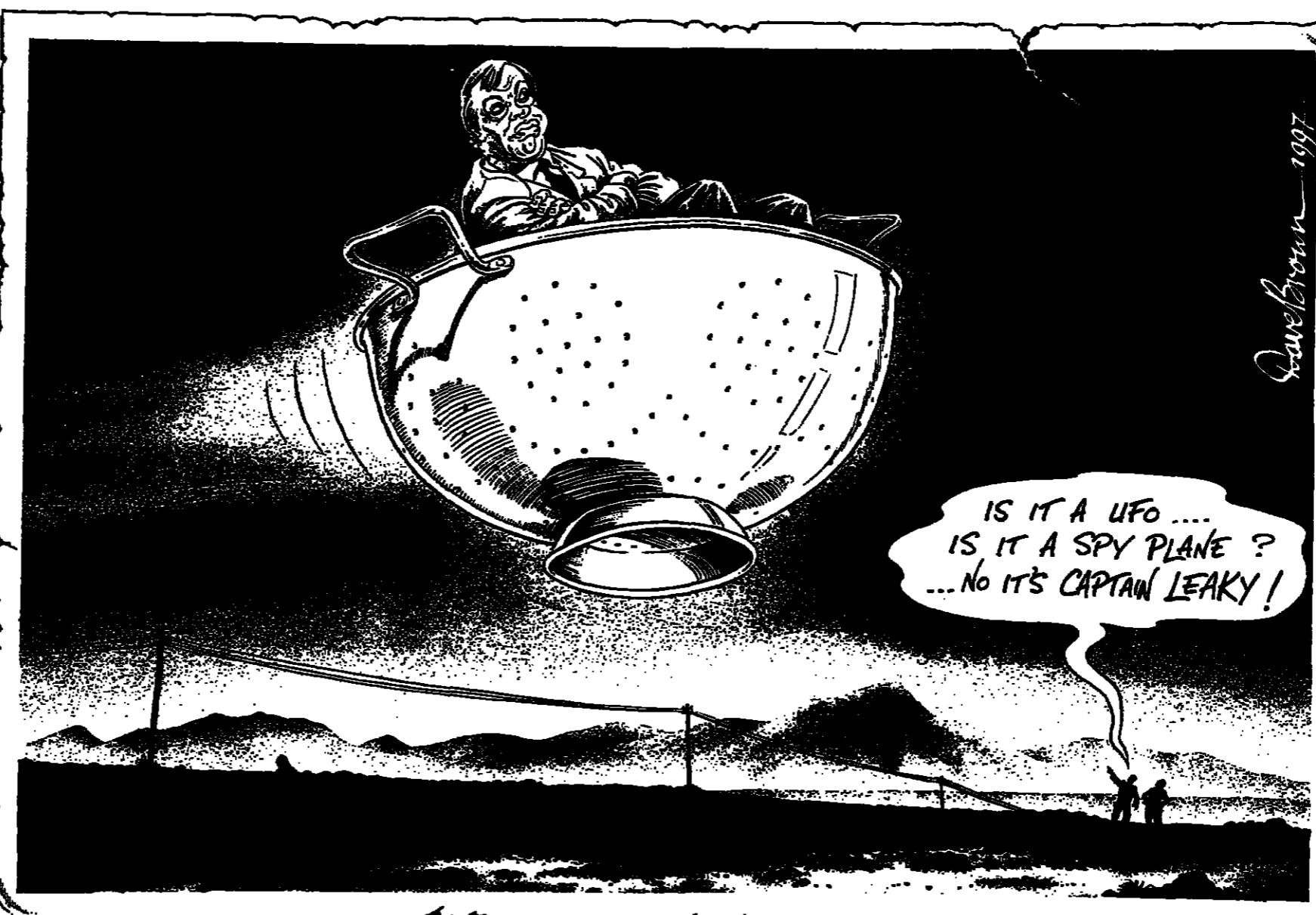
In occupational health, one met-jerk official response to any report of illnesses due to chemical exposures has sometimes been that "workers are 'stressed'" or hysterical and that the problem is psychological and not physical; hence the cases cannot be the fault of employers or governments who regulate such chemicals. It is strange to see this thesis now emerging as a catch-all explanation for many of the illnesses attributed to Gulf war veterans.

Some of the Gulf war veterans may well be experiencing such stress. To suggest that this explains the symptoms of all or most of the veterans ignores much evidence from occupational hygiene, toxicology, occupational health and safety and epidemiology. It may well, however, prove an easy and near excuse for those governments wanting to avoid explaining what did happen in the Gulf and why many people serving there reported symptoms consistent with chemical poisoning.

Professor ANDREW WATTERSON
Centre for Occupational and
Environmental Health,
De Montfort University
Leicester

A new system for police complaints

Sir: Your report that the Police Federation has written to the Home Secretary suggesting the introduction of an independent system to investigate police complaints ("Police call for new corruption body", 4 August) is very welcome. The federation has been saying for many years that if people are unhappy with the system of the police investigating police then it would not be opposed to change. Liberty has also been pressing for an independent system for many years and the increasing scepticism of members of the public suggests that now is the time to change it.



Whilst the Police Complaints Authority does provide an independent element, the actual investigation of complaints by police officers often from the same force, can no longer claim widespread support. The increasing numbers of people who ignore the complaints system in favour of taking their cases through the civil courts is evidence of this dissatisfaction.

Civil actions against the police are preferred because the complainant is a real party to the process, legal aid is available to pay for representation by lawyers, the police are under a duty to disclose all the evidence and documents, and the issues are raised in a public trial where officers are asked to justify their decisions. What is also important is that in many cases the issues of fact and the awards of damages have to be resolved by juries. Of course civil actions increasingly often lead to payments of damages whereas complaints only lead to officers being disciplined.

Civil actions against the police do not of course provide an adequate remedy for those who are not poor enough to qualify for legal aid nor for those who were "only" subject to a minor assault or who were "only" unlawfully detained for a short period. Civil action is not therefore a substitute for a proper complaints system. Nevertheless any new system, apart from being independent, would have to ensure a full role for the complainant, proper disclosure and be open and transparent. We have a long way to go before the current complaints system meets these principles but the first steps need to be taken now.

JOHN WADHAM
Director, Liberty
London SE1

Tough action on animal cruelty

Sir: I fail to understand how postponing the revocation of Huntingdon Life Sciences' licence until November ("Huntingdon may lose its licence", 25 July) solves the problem of the large number of animals on site.

The cruelty which has been exposed at Huntingdon Life Sciences is not an isolated incident but, as has been proved time and time again by undercover investigations carried out by animal rights groups, is common to very many, if not all, animal testing laboratories. The spectacle of Huntingdon's more prestigious clients falling over themselves to dissociate themselves from this latest and very public disclosure is nauseous to say the least. Likewise, whose behaviour prior to the exposure is yet more evidence against the validity of its inspection system.

To scold Huntingdon is not sufficient, even such public scolding as has been taking place. In order that we can begin to have faith in this government's proposed review of the Animals (SR) Act (at present little more than a vivisectionists' charter), Huntingdon Life Sciences' licence must be revoked immediately and permanently, all those implicated in the wrongdoings, including senior staff and Home Office officials, must be prosecuted and Dr David

Christopher, Huntingdon's research director, must be forced to resign from the Animal Procedures Committee.

ROSALIND FISHER
London SE15

experts in this country so that we can assure ourselves that it is well based. The ONS paper referred to in your article was a discussion document containing preliminary views from one statistician on some aspects of the work programme.

When this work is complete and has been tested against parallel international research we will be in a better position to form a view about whether or not the RPI is biased. We would consult widely on such an important issue.

TIM HOLT
Director, Registrar General and Head of the Government Statistical Service Office for National Statistics London SW1

Exchanging old rituals for new

Sir: Given time, clergy devote much care and thought in constructing funeral services but the task becomes more difficult as numbers increase (Letters, 1 August).

The more the numbers of requests for non-religious funerals multiply, the more difficult it will become for their conductors, too, to avoid falling back upon routines.

Clergy generally have a regular two or three funerals to conduct each week, round the year (just do the arithmetic). Remaining fresh under such a sustained demand and providing continuing support after the funeral (where

it is asked for) as the numbers accumulate, stretches personal resources. If demands upon them increase, non-religious conductors, too, will scarcely avoid a similar trial.

Clergy spend much time before a funeral sounding out what rituals mourners in all their variety have already in mind and are going to be relying on, so as to be able to supply them. The more common non-religious funerals should become, the more one would expect to see patterns of words and actions emerging – fresh, maybe, conceivably totally non-traditional – but these would, in effect, be new rituals. Indeed, anthologies of "non-ritualistic" ideas for funerals are already published (and very helpful some of them are) but what are these but new rituals in the process of formation?

The Rev MICHAEL ATKINSON Ilkley, West Yorkshire

Commercial radio at the BBC

Sir: While Radio 3's as well as Radio 4's innovations are under the spotlight, may I ask why practically every item on the "On Air" programme nowadays has to be preceded or followed by a BBC commercial?

Commercial broadcasters of classical music (or of what passes for it these days) at least refrain from such continuous, blatant and, if one regular listener's reaction is anything to go by, ultimately self-defeating, self-advertisement.

WALTER GREY
London N3

Valuable role of Scottish Ballet

Sir: I would like to express my personal support for the Scottish Ballet and do most fervently hope it will be allowed to have a strong future in Scotland (Letters, 2 August).

When I joined the Music Department of the Arts Council of Great Britain (as it then was) in 1970, almost my first task as officer responsible for dance was to make flying visits to Scotland with my then Chair of Dance, Peter Williams, to assist in an investigation by the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) into the somewhat precarious future of Scottish Ballet, which at SAC's invitation had moved permanently to Scotland in 1969, but was encountering financial problems.

After some months of deliberations, we were delighted when SAC endorsed the company's future, recognising the value of the company's service, not only in major Scottish theatres but throughout the Highlands and Islands, together with an approach to outreach work which was almost unique in its day.

Throughout my service as Dance Director (1979-89) for ACGB this company was often held up as a good role model for its very special service to Scotland while at the same time having the talent to present the major "classics" at international standard – feel certain it would be a real deprivation for dance lovers in Scotland if the company were allowed to close.

As a member of the board of Birmingham Royal Ballet I was very pleased indeed to know that our production of *La Fille Mal Gardée* has been offered on loan to Scottish Ballet for presentation this Christmas if the company is enabled to survive. Can the Scottish Arts Council now show similar generosity of spirit in its attitude to the current negotiations and find a positive solution to the crisis?

JANE NICHOLAS
London W6

Renewable energy for the Dome

Sir: I would have thought a better proposition than to clad the Millennium Dome with PVC (Letters, 4 August) would be to use a combination of aluminium and photo-voltaic cells. The former is fully recyclable and the latter fully reusable: important considerations for a structure which is likely to have a short lifetime.

The use of photo-voltaic cells in a substantial way would also enable the exhibition to have a display about renewable energy, which ought to be high on the list of priorities, given the rapidly growing importance of developing a sustainable society.

CH OSMAN
Aberdeen

British Museum: clear the car park

Sir: I am delighted that the eyesore of car parking is to be removed from the courtyard of the Courtauld Gallery at Somerset House (report, 28 July).

Now, can we achieve the same at the British Museum? It is a disgrace that cars are allowed to clog the entrance and the space around this great building.

PHILIP STOTT
Gravesend, Kent

The battle not to be left behind

Despite a shared political heritage, Tony Blair's New Labour government is very different from Lionel Jospin's new Socialist one. John Lichfield asks which is most likely to deliver on its promises

President Chirac loves his little jokes, even in defeat. When Tony Blair went to the Elysée palace for lunch in June, the Gaullist President greeted him warmly and congratulated him on his first month in office. But he added: "You must go further, if you are going to keep up with us Socialists..."

It was a pleasant little joke, which worked on three levels. Mr Chirac was mocking himself, because his centre-right coalition had lost the parliamentary election two weeks before. Second, he was teasing Mr Blair, for having seamlessly and cheerfully abandoned the use of the word socialist. Third, he was suggesting that the simultaneous success of the left in London and Paris, for the first time in half a century, might be an invitation to cross-channel competition, rather than brotherly understanding.

On that same day, the newly-installed Socialist Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, could find no time to see the visiting Labour Prime Minister. There was a flurry of speculation, in both the British and French press, that the two men had conceived an instant dislike for one another. The speculation (including some by the present writer) has since been dismissed by French and British officials as misplaced: Jospin and Blair, they say, get on perfectly well. Although no firm plans have yet been made, the two prime ministers hope to meet informally during their holidays this month, close to Mr Jospin's political base south of Toulouse.

What remains certain is that, whether they like it or not, whether they like each other or not, Jospin and Blair are rivals. They are rivals for the moral and actual leadership of the European centre-left; but also in a perverse way, they are domestic rivals.

If Jospin succeeds, with a more interventionist, more demand-oriented programme than New Labour, the success will be thrown in Blair's face by Labour dissidents and *Guardian* leadership writers. If Blair succeeds while preserving the market orthodoxy of the Eighties and Nineties, never

quite accepted in France, his success will be seized by the French right (is already being seized) as a cudgel with which to beat "Jospinism".

In one sense, this is inevitable. The two men are trying to answer the same question: what are left-of-centre politics for in a post-socialist world? In another sense, comparison is unfair, or misleading: the two men are sitting examinations with different questions. Britain and France are neighbouring but dissimilar countries which are at different stages in their political and economic cycles.

After the achievements, but also the excesses of 18 years of dogmatic Conservatism, Tony Blair inherited something very rare in politics: a booming economy coupled with a popular thirst for change. Unemployment is low, growth impressive. So much so that his chief problem is to prevent heated domestic demand from boiling up into inflation. He has a garrulous majority and no organised opposition.

Lionel Jospin inherits a series of botched semi-reforms stretching back over six years and three governments. The domestic economy is faltering: domestic demand is falling; unemployment is still rising (up to 12.6 per cent in June). He has to cohabit with President Chirac, who can pick his opportunities to trip him up. He has a slender parliamentary majority, which includes Communists, Greens and radical socialists, who have very different ideas to his own (and to one another).

The first weeks in office – 100 days for Blair, 60 for Jospin – seem to have produced a clear victory for Blair's side. The Prime Minister's popularity has increased; he has made few mistakes; the Government has remained disciplined and, publicly at least, united. Gordon Brown's Budget was a media and public relations triumph (even if the markets still have doubts).

Jospin, by contrast, got himself into a series of muddles over the European single currency, the Renault closure in Belgium and immigration. His ministers contradicted one another publicly. His popularity has declined (but not much).

Partly this can be explained functionally. Blair knew that he was going to win the election: he

had several years to prepare for office. Labour was careful to promise nothing it could not deliver.

Jospin, like everyone else, thought that he was going to lose the election, which in any case came sooner than expected. The French Socialist programme was an attempt to limit the electoral damage: no one expected to have to implement it. Up to 700,000 jobs would be created through state spending, half in state jobs. Weekly working hours would be reduced from 39 to 35 with no loss of pay. There would be no austerity programme. No tax rises. France would still meet the budget criteria for joining Economic and Mon-

etary growth, which is nothing of his making, may rescue Jospin.

Despite the rise in unemployment in June, the outlook for the French economy is now the best it has been in five years. The franc has sunk by 20 per cent against the dollar and the pound in eight months. Inflation remains scarcely perceptible. Interest rates are low. Exports, already booming for months, have now become frantically good. According to a semi-official projection, the French economy should grow at an annual rate of 3 per cent in the second half of this year, the same as Britain's.

It may take a while for domestic demand to respond, and unemployment to fall. But any sustained increase in growth will ease Mr Jospin's task in squaring the circle of his election pledges over the next couple of years.

And here is the rub. A short-term recovery of growth would be welcome but it would do nothing to solve the longer-term ills of the French economy. It may allow Mr Jospin to muddle through his five years without achieving much. On the other hand, it could give him an opportunity to be as creative as Tony Blair, in some ways more creative.

Unlike Mr Blair and President Clinton, Mr Jospin does not follow a Thatcher or a Reagan. The US and British state sectors have shrunk in the last 20 years; in France the state has grown. One in four French people who have a job work, in some way, for the government. This may not, in itself, be as important as the corporatist attitudes in France: the aversion to risk, the lack of productive investment. The export boom is startling but it depends mostly on traditional luxury goods, subsidised farm produce, weaponry and machinery from state-controlled or state-influenced industries. Exports are exports. But France, unlike, say Italy, remains poor at creating the kind of small or medium hi-tech and service companies which are rich in new jobs: hence, in part, the stubbornly high levels of unemployment.

The philosophical underpinning to Blairism (but also to the successful social-democratic models in the Netherlands or Denmark) is that you must create wealth before you spend it. The creation of wealth is seen as a matter for individuals and businesses; the spending of wealth, a

matter for individuals but also, more than Thatcherism would accept, the state. Blairism, if it delivers on its promises, believes in the private creation of wealth but public investment in health and education and training. It believes in public service, although not much in public ownership.

The relative clarity of this vision is possible because Thatcherism went before. France has not been through this revolution, a revolution of attitudes as much as structures. France – and not just the French left – is still persuaded that the state can create wealth or should be part of that process, hence the Socialists' promise to create more state employment and tinker with working hours. There are superficial similarities between Gordon Brown's welfare-to-work programme and Mr Jospin's new jobs-for-youth. But the British programme is about training; the French programme about creating from thin air new state, or state-subsidised jobs.

In truth, Jospin and some of his ministers do sometimes think more like Blair and his team than the conventional wisdom allows. Jospin in his first speech to parliament made a distinction between public ownership and public service. It now seems inevitable that, partly for budgetary reasons, some degree of privatisation will continue, whatever his Communist junior partners in government might think. Jospin also gave notice that welfare for the middle classes may have to come to an end (aka the abolition of university grants in Britain). The quarter-completed reform of the public health service may be abandoned in favour of something much more radical, perhaps more private insurance for the relatively well-off. Again budgetary need could lead the way. At the same time, the older thinking persists. The plan to reduce working hours is clear to the Communists, and some Socialists, and will be pursued.

Mr Jospin, in other words, is constructing Jospinism as he goes along. If he is lucky with the economy over the next couple of years, he could re-set his own examination paper and attempt a more ambitious reform. Will he? It is not to be excluded. But he does not have the political freedom of action of New Labour. The similarities between Jospin and Blair may be greater than commentators imagine. The greatest difference, however, is in the countries they have to govern, and that is a big difference.

Blair was careful to promise nothing he could not deliver.

Jospin thought he was going to lose the election: he never expected to implement the French Socialist programme

Photograph: Reuters

The two men are both trying to say what left-of-centre politics are for in a post-socialist world

tary Union (Emu). Mr Jospin, like an escapist throwing away the key to his chains, added a final promise: to keep all his promises.

But, two months into office, Jospin's record is far from disastrous or discreditable. The shilly-shallying over whether France would make the Emu guideline of 3 per cent of GNP budget deficit this year seemed like incompetence. Some of the confusion was damaging. But look at the overall effect. It has prepared market opinion to regard a near-miss as a triumph. The stop-gap budget proposals announced last month were a fudge, if you like, but also a brilliant exercise in playing for time. The one-off taxes on the largest and most profitable businesses are broader than Gordon Brown's windfall tax on privatised utilities but little different in principle. For the time being, Jospin, with a very poor hand, has simultaneously created the German (just), the markets, the Communists, and French public opinion.

Jospin is not as immediately likable as Blair. He may not (yet) have thought so deeply about the future of the left. But he should not be dismissed lightly. He may have the one quality vital to all successful politics: luck. Jospin promised that his programme would rekindle growth; in

truth, growth, which is nothing of his making, may rescue Jospin.

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A final snipe at the last Governor goes wide of the mark

If nothing else, the highly publicised inquiry into whether the former Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, has breached the Official Secrets Act by helping Jonathan Dimbleby, author of *The Last Governor*, should do wonders for sales of the book. Its confirmation by Peter Mandelson, which dominated Sunday's television and radio bulletins, also conveniently diverted attention from an unusual spate of otherwise rather unfavourable publicity for the government. But neither consequence should obscure the fact that this is about something large and historically quite important: the fratricidal struggle within Whitehall and the very highest reaches of the Conservative Party to imprint on posterity competing versions of Britain's last great retreat from empire.

Ministers could scarcely have blocked this inquiry. But real as it is, it's a pretty odd one. Apparently sanctioned by the outgoing Permanent Secretary Sir John Coles, it had by yesterday made no effort to interview a man who would have thought might be a prime witness, namely Mr Patten himself. Secondly, there is next to no chance of proving, short of Mr Patten announcing that he was in breach of the Act, a case against him in court. After all, Dimbleby is certainly – and rightly – not going to discuss his sources. The only conclusion, therefore, can be that this is little more than the latest guerrilla engagement in the fightback by the anti-Patten forces inside the Foreign Office.

This is a struggle that has created strange alliances of a sort which cut directly across the drearily familiar divisions in both British Conservatism and the Foreign Office. On one side, for example, are those great China hands Lord Howe, Sir Edward Heath, and in a supporting role Michael Heseltine, backed by a group of mandarins and ex-mandarins led by the redoubtable sinologist Sir Percy Cradock, the longest serving Joint Intelligence committee chairman under Margaret Thatcher. On the other, Chris Patten, and – more or less – Douglas Hurd, and, since 1992, Lady Thatcher herself (whose consistent backing for Patten's Governorship is not as fully acknowledged by Mr Dimbleby as it might have been). Both Sir Percy and Lord Howe yesterday were dismissive of the row over leaks – pointing out correctly that it was a distraction from the real argument over Patten's conduct as Governor.

At the heart of the dispute is the democracy question. And specifically whether Patten was right to fight successfully in 1994 for direct elections to the Legislative Council (LegCo) or whether, as the China hands claim, it merely served to infuriate the Chinese leadership and interfere with the "smooth transition" from British rule. Once upon a time we were told, with total confidence, that the "people of Hong Kong don't want democracy". That wholly untenable proposition was exploded by the clear evidence that they did. So now the China hands' modified argument is that Patten's actions may have delayed the introduction of democratic elections in Hong Kong by the Chinese government. This ill-substantiated claim continues to be made. Yet Patten's Governorship succeeded both in nurturing democratic politicians in Hong Kong, and ensuring



Donald Macintyre

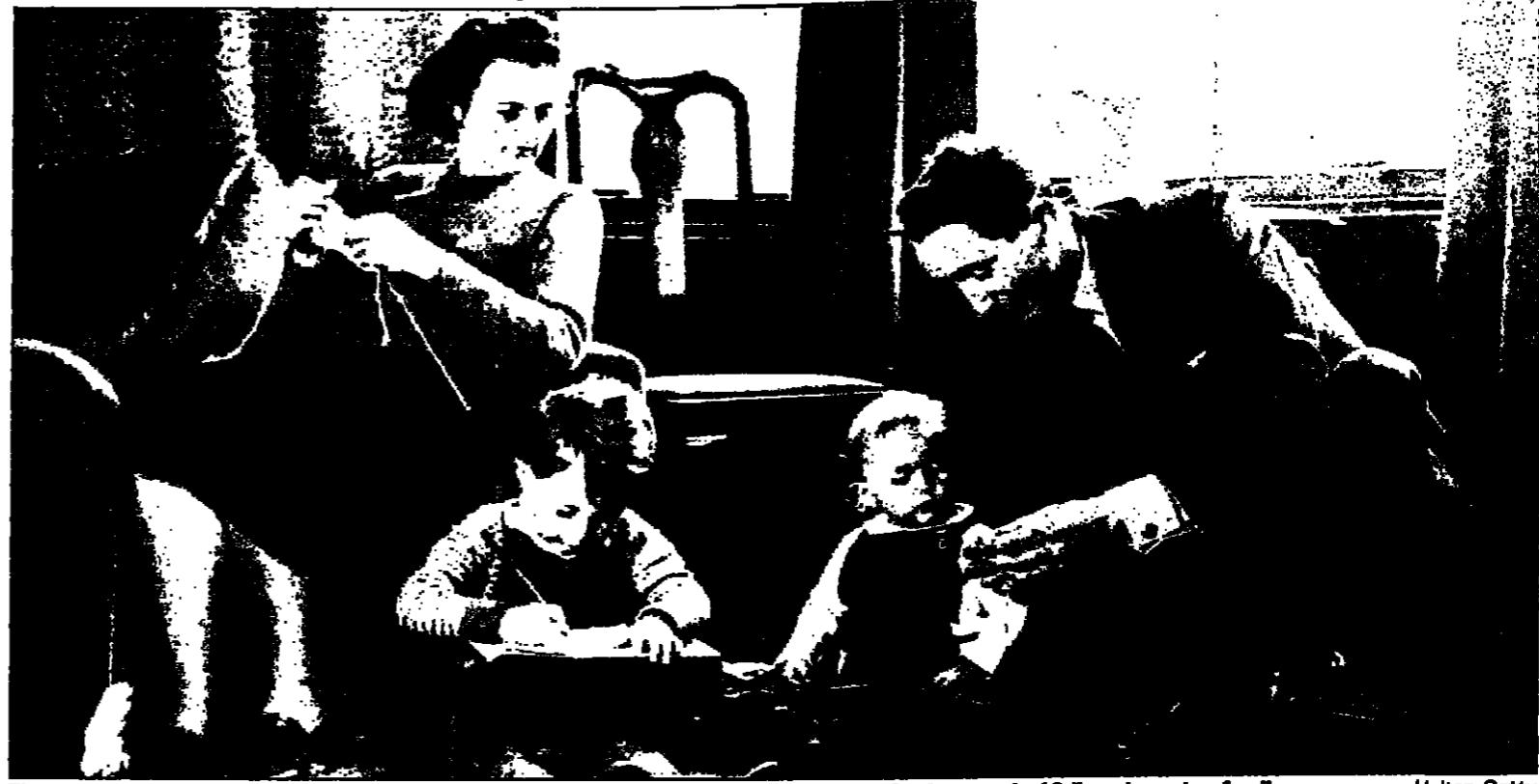
What has infuriated the FO mandarins is the light Dimbleby's book about Patten sheds on the secret negotiations in the 1980s

that the US will watch its progress closely. What has infuriated the Foreign Office mandarins is the ample and unsavoury light Dimbleby sheds on the secret negotiations in the mid 1980s, during which senior British officials bent over backwards to reassure the Chinese government that the proposal for direct elections from 1988 should not be read as a commitment. It was this clandestine backtracking which led to a secret deal to postpone the direct elections – other than for a handful of LegCo seats – provided that China committed itself to introduce direct elections some time after 1997. It was this deal which, in effect, Patten so embarrassingly "broke" when he introduced a bill for direct elections to LegCo in 1994. Almost unbelievably, it had survived a consultation exercise which the Hong Kong government, apparently under orders from the Foreign Office, quite simply gerrymandered. The result was a majority well in excess of two to one in favour of elections. But the Hong Kong government then hit on a wheeze which would have done credit to the most insipid totalitarian state. Most of the signatures against were on pre-printed forms handed out by the pro-China groups. Most of those in favour were on petitions. So the Hong Kong government simply gave the pre-printed forms more weight than the petitions and cheerfully announced that the survey had gone against direct democracy.

There is something grimly appropriate that all this should now be the subject of an Official Secrets Act enquiry. There have been dark mutterings in Whitehall that Dimbleby's book contained sensitive intelligence material. But what material? Nobody seriously believes, for example, that the British government knew only through intelligence that Peking was actively communicating with its supporters in Hong Kong. It was scarcely secret at the time. What has really angered officials about Dimbleby's book, surely, is not material in it that jeopardised national security at all; most of the revelations in Dimbleby's book are of information known both to the British government and an often far from friendly foreign power – but not to the British or Hong Kong people. (It would be nice to think that almost everything revealed in Dimbleby's book would be automatically available under the Government's promised Freedom of Information Act. That is far from certain, and depends in large part on how narrowly ministers draw the category of "advice to ministers" which they intend to exclude from the scope of the Act). No, it's appropriate because secrecy is a lot of what this chapter of British history is about. One of the most ringing passages of the book is the one in which diplomats like Sir Robin McLaren, then adviser to the Hong Kong government, recoiled from Margaret Thatcher's rather modest demand that they report the progress of negotiations leading to the 1984 Joint Declaration to the Hong Kong executive council. The current official secrets inquiry will surely soon be finished. A more fruitful follow-up might be an inquiry into what lessons might be learned from the way negotiations were conducted from 1979 to 1990.

So the UK is past its best. Want to bet?

by Andreas Whittam Smith



The good old days? One in five children in the UK now lives with a single parent and a further one in 12 lives in a step-family

Hulton Getty

I have recently had the conversation we all have from time to time. My friend Max said suddenly: "You know, the country is finished." He had in mind the decline in church-going, the diminished role of marriage and the rise in the number of abortions. I, the perennial optimist, disagreed with Max's conclusions and wanted to frame some sort of bet – I would pay up in so many years' time if the country was truly finished, and he would reward me if it wasn't. So I have been casting about to find ways of measuring a nation's well-being.

A good starting place is the Human Development Index, calculated by the United Nations. The components are longevity, knowledge and income. Longevity is life expectancy at birth; knowledge is defined as a combination of adult literacy and years of schooling; and income is income. Professor Crafts at the London School of Economics has compiled the index for 25 countries, and carried the series back to 1870 for 16 of them. The UK was in second place in 1870 (after Australia and before the United States). It had slipped to fourth by 1913, was fifth in 1950, and seventh in 1970. In 1992 it was 10th, one behind the Netherlands and just ahead of Germany, with the first three spots occupied by Canada, Switzerland and Japan.

Taking wealth creation alone, I would adjust the standard measurement in two ways. First, account should be taken

of hours worked for a given output, so that the amount of leisure time we enjoy is implicitly recognised. In the UK, the annual hours worked per person have fallen from just under 60 hours a week in 1870 to half that in 1992. In South Korea, on the other hand, the average working week went up from 45 hours in 1950 to 56 hours 40 years later. On this measure the UK is the 11th most productive economy in the world, ahead

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18 in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France are twice as high as they are here.

Max was right to mention the family, but not in terms of whether couples were marrying or cohabiting. The important test is the sort of settings in which children are being brought up. For it is beyond doubt that the outcomes are more likely to be favourable in two-parent families than in lone-parent households. It is

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The number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in England and Wales has increased steadily from the early 1950s, when there were fewer than half a million a year, to more than five million nowadays. And remember that only just under half the number of crimes actually committed are reported to the police –

Of the eight tests of a nation's progress, Britain passes four, but fails in terms of equality, family structure, crime and pollution

even of Japan, in 16th place.

The second adjustment concerns equality. After decades of stability, the gap between the rich and the poor in the UK began to widen during the 1980s. Between then and the middle of the 1990s, people in the top 20 per cent of incomes experienced a rise in their earnings of 45 per cent in real terms, while those in the bottom fifth saw their incomes grow by only 9 per cent.

Inequality is repugnant in itself, and it will have unpleasant consequences. That there have not been until now may be explained by the fact that people's circumstances change quite rapidly, so that some of those classified as poor at any one time will be able to improve their situation while others are sinking. Thus, more than half the people in the lowest 10 per cent of incomes own a car, three-quarters have cen-

tral heating, and more than two-thirds own a video cassette recorder.

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How can we measure political freedom? The Heritage Foundation in Washington assesses economic freedom. The Committee to Protect Journalists in New York monitors press freedom. Amnesty's reports are an invaluable source of information. A Berlin-based organisation, Transparency International, lists countries according to their degree of corruption. At present, Denmark is ranked as the least corrupt and Nigeria as the world champions of sleaze. The UK generally comes out well on such criteria.

The preliminary result is that of the eight tests, the UK passes four – human development, wealth creation, education and freedom – but fails in terms of equality, family structure, crime and pollution.

In measuring pollution, I would concentrate on emissions of carbon dioxide, because they do the most harm to the global atmosphere. Emissions for industrial and domestic use fell between 1971

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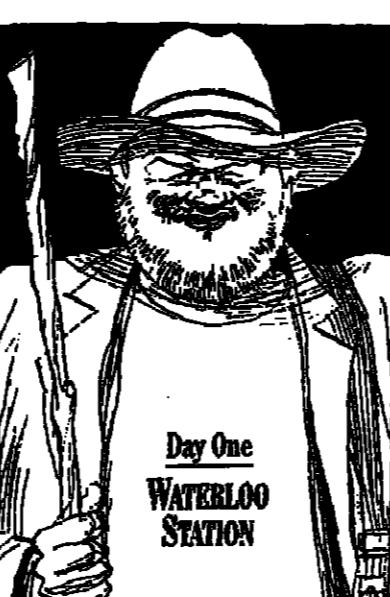
The traveller's thoughts on setting out

I decided to take a chance on the apricots. Everything else that was perishable I put on the kitchen table in a large mound and ate it: half a carton of houmous, the remnants of a summer pudding, two raw carrots, a whole packet of beetroot, a pound of peas in their shells, a quarter of a treacle tart and half a loaf of apricot oat bread. It would take just over four weeks I reckoned to complete my tour through what Daniel Defoe in the 18th century referred to as *The Whole Island of Great Britain*. I like my apricots intense and wizened so I put them in a bowl on the window ledge where they would get the full sun and left them for my return. Then I finished off everything on the table in a gargantuan tidyng.

There is something about a journey which responds to the human instinct for tidiness. They are bits of life you can plan for. I thought as I shuffled through my wardrobe trying to decide what was the minimum I would need for three weeks on the road. I would have to appear presentable for everyone from a Japanese industrialist in the former coalmining areas of the Welsh valleys to the occupants of a hostel for the homeless in Edinburgh. In between there would be the prosperous business folk of Ulster, an extended Hindu family celebrating a Vedic coming of age near Leicester, the country folk attending the Westmorland wrestling at Cockermouth Agricultural Show and a variety of bed-and-breakfast landladies. The bag also had to be light enough to carry while walking.

Packing in such circumstances is more than an act of economy. It is an existential moment of self-definition: to this your life must be reduced – a

A JOURNEY AROUND THE WHOLE ISLAND OF GREAT BRITAIN



WITH PAUL VALLEY

Worcester in the 1470s, became obsessed with the cost of the exercise or with the trivia of topography. But all in some way, in the words of William of Malmesbury who preceded his namesake in the 12th century, "hold a glass up to the nation".

With some it is necessary to read between the lines: in 1534 John Leland, the King's Antiquary, was touring to catalogue for the monasteries, and Daniel Defoe's journeys were undertaken as a secret agent to spy on the views of local worthies for his master, the Tory politician Lord Harley. With others, like George Orwell on the road to Wigan Pier, J B Priestley on his English Journey or a host of modern travel-writers, the overt intention has been to take the pulse of the nation.

I resolved to do the same. In Blair's Britain the social pendulum is to swing, we are told, from rights and individualism to responsibilities and community. Was this some hankering after a golden age or might such things still be possible in this pre-millennial age? And if so would this New Jerusalem be found in the town or the country, at work or at play, amid prosperity or adversity? My thoughts took a more vulgar turn as I approached the train. Would I get a farter or a snorer, I wondered, as I climbed aboard and sought my berth. Past experience on sleepers had invariably offered a companion with some anti-social traits in the bunk above or below, for on British Rail sleepers the solo traveller must share a compartment with a stranger. And even on those occasions when no one climbs into the other bunk the possibility of their later arrival preserves an odd public quality to the

tiny space with its two sets of dangling leather-padded clothes hangers and its foldaway sink in which you and an unknown individual must perform a cramped postage-stamp minuet. Perhaps that time, it suddenly occurred to me, guiltily recalling the massive clearance of houmous, raw peas and beetroot, the nocturnal peasantism might be me.

But this time there was no upper berth. The top bunk was packed still inside the wall of the little cabin. With its single bed the space took on the air of a monastic cell. Something in it prompted me to unpack my sparse belongings and set them neatly on the bed as if for a kit inspection.

With the same precision I unpacked the Great Western complementary overnight toilet bag and arranged its contents in a line: paper floor mat, flannel, aromatherapy go-to-sleep face wipe and refreshing wake-up spray together with an angular green plastic shoe horn, comb and toothbrush. What kind of person would come on a journey like this so ill-prepared as to need all this, I wondered to myself, and then unpacked my own toilet bags to discover the answer was ... someone like me. I had forgotten both brush and toothpaste. I climbed into the starched sheets, having set the thermostat to cool in anticipation of over-generous heating, and tried to sleep. Outside the unnaturally bright tones of the recorded departure announcements told me that the last train to my home in the Surrey suburbs was about to leave.

The sleeper was late, I pulled another blanket around me and drifted off. At 12.57am, an hour behind schedule, I half awoke at the gentle jolt as the train left London and headed West.

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business & city

FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
DEPUTY BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: MICHAEL HARRISON

British Gas triumphs in domestic trials

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Gas has emerged as the surprise winner from the trials of domestic competition, according to confidential industry research, which shows the company has unexpectedly kept hold of the bulk of its highest spending customers.

The survey, commissioned by the Electricity Association for rival suppliers and seen by *The Independent*, shows that new entrants into the market have been most successful in persuading lower-spending households to abandon British Gas, the opposite outcome to that predicted.

It provides grim reading for

independent gas companies, which are already grappling with non-existent profit margins, because the most recent trial involves one of the UK's most affluent regions. More than 300,000 homes have so far deserted British Gas in the latest trials, which involve 1.4 million homes in Avon and Dorset and Kent and Sussex.

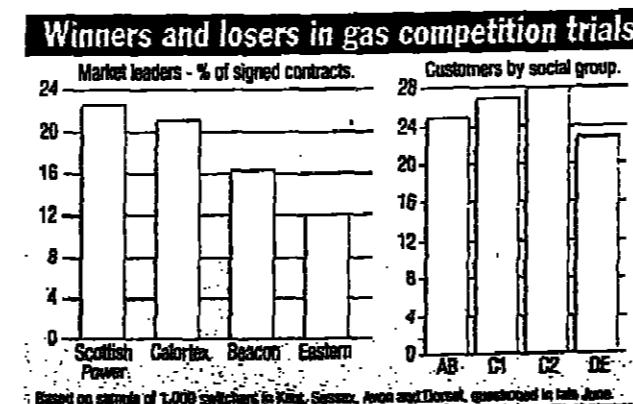
In addition, a separate unpublished study into the first competition trial in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, also by the Electricity Association, revealed that more than a third of customers who switched from British Gas were overcharged, some massively so, in their last bill from the company.

The most surprising finding

from the first survey, carried out in June, is that new suppliers have grabbed their biggest foothold in the "C2" social bracket, which make up 28 per cent of homes that have switched supplier.

In contrast, the wealthiest households in the professional and managerial "AB" segment, who generally have the biggest gas bills, have given the experiment a notably cooler reception, accounting for 25 per cent of those moving to rival companies. Such customers, which provide gas suppliers with their main source of profits, could expect to make much greater savings on annual bills of at least £500.

Even the lowest "DE" social category used by market re-



searchers is responsible for some 23 per cent of homes which have left British Gas, attracted by savings of up to 25 per cent. More than half of the

switchers lived in three-bedroomed houses, while just 20 per cent owned four-bedroomed or larger properties.

Privately, rival suppliers had

hoped to grab a much larger slice of big-spending homes from Centrica, the demerged British Gas supply business. Though they are obliged to sell to all social groups, it would be much harder to make profits without a substantial proportion of wealthier consumers.

One independent supplier said: "Centrica must be laughing at these figures. It may not be intentional but they've managed to off-load some of their less profitable customers on to us."

The survey is likely to lead to

renewed concern that profits in the domestic energy business are too small to encourage potential competitors like the supermarket chains or oil giants to join in. Groups such as Sains-

bury's, Tesco and British Petroleum are all thought to have rejected selling gas, disappointing the industry regulator.

Of the four largest independent gas companies, Scottish Power has been the most successful in the latest trials, according to the Electricity Association, with more than 35 per cent of its customers in the AB category. ScottishPower's market share of more than 22 per cent is also the largest, closely followed by CalorGas, a joint venture between Calor and Tescos. But only 15 per cent of CalorGas' customers are in the AB group.

Some customers had hundreds of pounds accidentally debited from their bank accounts after British Gas miscalculated their final bills, a mistake blamed on faulty computer data. British Gas later apologised for the mess.

Pearson sets out plans to double value

Andrew Yates

Marjorie Scardino, the chief executive of Pearson, yesterday pledged to double the size of the media-to-entertainment conglomerate over the next five years by achieving double digit earnings growth every year.

She also hinted that Pearson, whose portfolio includes the *Financial Times*, Penguin books, Madame Tussaud's and Alton Towers to raise extra cash for expansion. However, Ms Scardino refused to expand on which other businesses are likely to be bought and sold. She also refused to be drawn on the fate of Lazard.

Some City observers believe it sits awkwardly with the rest of the group's businesses, but Ms Scardino said Lazard produced "great profits and cashflow and involved little capital".

Pearson insisted that Channel 5, in which it owns a 24 per cent stake, is on track despite technical hitches which caused reception problems. The company claims that Channel 5, which began broadcasting this spring, has picked up new viewers in July and now attracts more than 3 per cent of the viewing population.

Pearson will have to pay more than £70m in start up costs for the Channel over the next few years. However, it plans to produce programmes for the new channel, which will bring in around £25m a year.

Ms Scardino also denied press reports of a boardroom rift with Pearson TV chief Greg Dyke and indicated that the television businesses will be part of the company's long-term future.

"Just to knock this on the head, I'd like to say that Greg and I are not having open warfare. It's just not true. Pearson Television is one of our fastest growing businesses and we are excited about it. We are looking at how to give the TV business greater scale and Greg and I are doing it together," Ms Scardino said yesterday. She dismissed talk of a management buy-out of Pearson TV as "so much bunk".

Pearson confirmed plans to dispose of its medical publishing arm, which publishes prestigious titles such as *Gray's Anatomy*. Analysts believe the business, which has an annual



John Bond, chief executive of HSBC (second right) gets up after announcing another surge in earnings. Photograph: AFP

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

The chairman of HSBC, Sir William Purves, poured cold water yesterday on persistent speculation that Britain's biggest financial group is poised to bid for another British bank. He said paying a premium to current market values in the high-flying sector would not be in the interests of HSBC's shareholders.

Speaking as the group announced much better than expected interim figures for the six months to June, Sir William added: "We don't have a shopping list. We're not active in this field. We've done quite a lot this year and we'll see that consolidate before we get excited about other things."

In an effort to make more staff shareholders Ms Scardino also announced plans to introduce share option packages and a new scheme to allow employees around the world to buy shares.

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HSBC scorns speculation on bid for bank

the interim dividend, to 20p a share, the group's shares soared in early trading, touching a record high of 223.15 before closing at 222.38, up 44.5p.

Even by the standards of the banking sector, HSBC's shares have been extraordinary performers over the past five years since the group acquired Midland Bank in a bid to diversify from its traditional Hong Kong base. Since the beginning of 1993, they have risen more than seven-fold.

HSBC's first-half profits of £2.62bn, up 13 per cent, were well above analysts' expectations of around £2.4bn. After a higher than forecast 33 per cent rise in

Acquisitions by HSBC in the past year have focused on expanding its interests in Latin America, where the property market was buoyant, and in the UK where corporate and mortgage lending was up.

He said that margins were under pressure at Midland Bank although the bank had managed a sharp fall in the cost income ratio to 56 per cent, well down on the 70 per cent ratio when it was taken over. Midland increased profits by 17 per cent to £512m.

Comment, page 15

group owns HongkongBank in the former colony and also controlling stake in Hang Seng Bank. He said HongkongBank's results had been hit by a £40m underwriting loss, but declined to give any further details.

The loss pegged profits from HongkongBank back to £151m (£818m), while Hang Seng Bank's profit grew 7 per cent to £394m (£368m).

HSBC reported growth in loans especially in Hong Kong, where the property market was buoyant, and in the UK where corporate and mortgage lending was up.

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Comment, page 15

£130m gain from the sale of BA's stake in US Airways, its former transatlantic partner.

The strength of sterling contributed to a 6.3 per cent fall in operating margins and a 2.4 per cent decline in passenger yields - the amount earned per kilometre flown.

Mr Ayling said that excluding the impact of the strong pound could knock a further £200m off profits. Alongside 28 per cent drop in operating profits for the first quarter, the news sent BA shares skidding down 50p to 610p, making them the worst performer on the FTSE 100 index.

The costs of the three-day stoppage in July are far higher than expected. Analysts had pencilled in losses of £40m-£60m. But BA said it was still feeling the effects of the dispute.

Although further stoppages are planned and unions and management have resumed talks on how to achieve the £42m cost savings BA is seeking, sickness levels among the 12,000 cabin crew staff are still 50 per cent above normal levels.

About 900 staff are off sick - 350 more than BA would expect at this time of year.

BA's chief executive, Bob Ayling, who was heavily criticised for the airline's tactics during the strike, would not comment on the progress in the talks but said he was optimistic that the difficulties between the two sides could be resolved.

"We can ill afford a costly dispute of this sort. I very much hope we can win the hearts and minds of employees and customers of the need for efficiency changes which are essential for the future," he added.

BA expects benefits from

the programme to exceed £200m this year and reach £1bn by the end of the decade.

Operating profits in the period from April to June were £140m compared with £195m last year. BA said that the overall impact of the strong pound had been to cut profits by £77m in the three months.

At the pre-tax level, profits were up by 47 per cent to £220m due to the one-off

Comment, page 15

Dial-a-Cab may take fresh route to drive for AIM

John Willcock

Central London's largest black taxi firm, Dial-a-Cab, announced yesterday that it was

considering ditching its friendly society status in favour of becoming a plc and floating on the Alternative Investment Market. The conversion and float would mean free "windfall" shares worth a minimum of £3,500 for all 1,628 member

drivers, according to Dial-a-Cab's chairman, Brian Rice. Mr Rice said the recent spate of building society conversions to plc status had "helped to focus our minds". He said the main reason for the change would be to release value built up by drivers who had spent years working for Dial-a-Cab.

We have approached the City advisers English Trust with

our conversion proposals and they have told us that each member would get at least £3,500 and possibly substantially more," Mr Rice said. English Trust is a firm of corporate advisers based in Chichester Square, London.

Dial-a-Cab was founded in 1953 as a friendly industrial provident society, or a co-operative. Mr Rice said that all members have to buy one share

in the society for £50 when they join, and then they sell the share back to the Society for just £50 when they leave, however long they have worked for the operation.

"I think in the main the vast majority of members would be in favour [of conversion]," he said.

"Giving people shares in Dial-a-Cab would also be a good way to incentivise the members."

Earlier this year the other big

London black-taxi firm, Computer Cab, proposed to float on AIM, but instead ended up selling an 80 per cent stake to overseas investors in Singapore and Australia.

Dial-a-Cab made net profits of £163,000 for the year ended 31 August 1996, and is expected to make around £800,000 for 1996/97.

"We're reasonably in the black," Mr Rice added.

Shire deal lifts biotech sector

Magnus Grimond

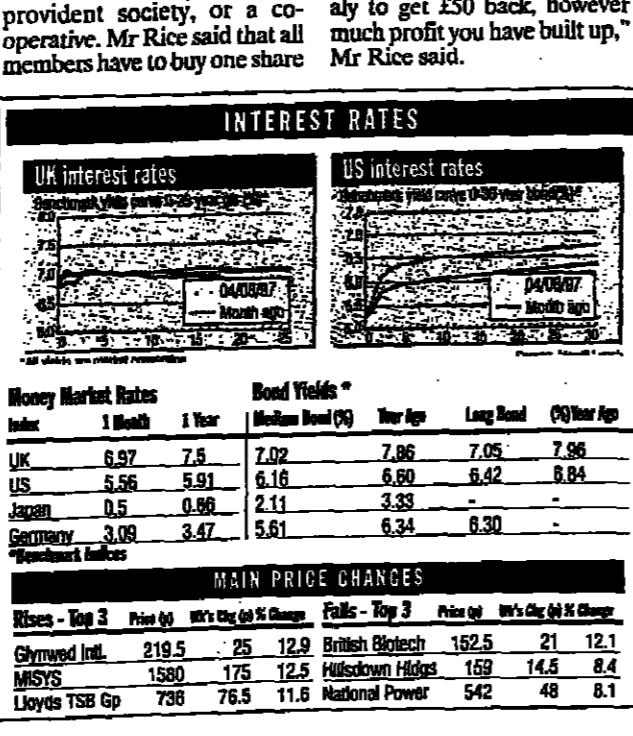
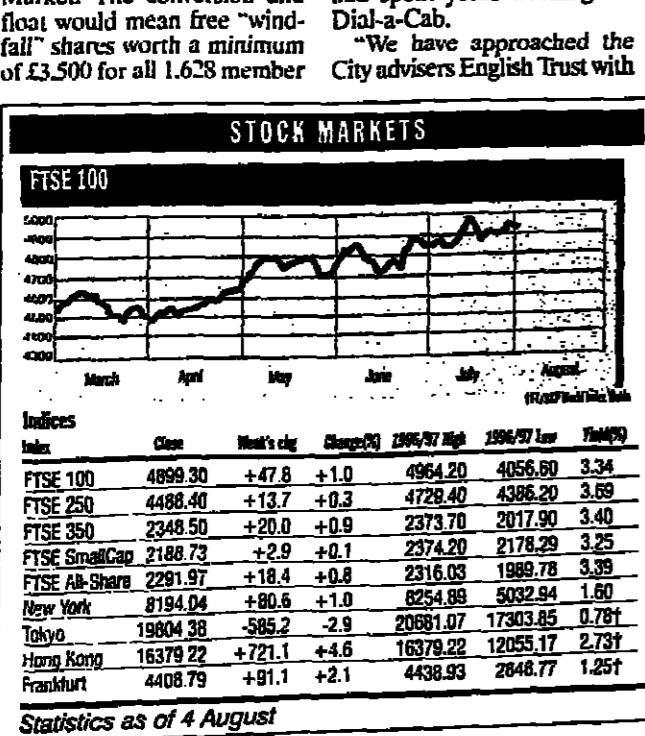
A \$186m (£114m) deal to buy

Shire Pharmaceuticals and good results from Oxford Molecular helped the biotechnology sector shrug off negative sentiment yesterday.

Shire saw its shares end 8p higher at 249.5p after revealing the purchase of Richwood Pharmaceutical of Kentucky, a competitor to Medeva in the market for drugs to control unruly children. Oxford Molecular's shares rose 3.5p to 248.5p after announcing losses cut by 27 per cent to £67,000 along with a move to pay £2m for an option to take control of Cambridge Combinatorial, the company run by Alan Marchington, younger brother of Oxford's chief executive, Tony Marchington.

Richwood says the product is longer lasting and has fewer side-effects. However, none of its drugs has patent protection and the group is facing a class action suit relating to its Phenetermine obesity treatment. The US Drug Enforcement Agency must also still approve Shire as a licence holder for strictly controlled drugs sold by Richwood.

Investment column, page 17





COMMENT

The ticklish question for the HSBC chairman is whether he can really afford to stand by and watch Midland become marginalised as the UK banking sector consolidates.

Sir William should consider catching this wave

First Sainsbury's caught the bug, now Richard Branson says he wants to be a banker. It is no wonder that HSBC's chairman, Sir William Purves, so smily about buying another British bank – with so many scrapping for a slice of the action, the juicy returns from the sector are plainly unsustainable.

From his perspective at the head of one of the few truly global commercial banks, the risks of missing out on the wave of consolidation in our mature, over-supplied and expensive banking industry must seem pretty insignificant. To understand why he is right to tread warily over here, consider the following. Start with an economy worth £100bn, grow it at 2 per cent a year for 10 years and you end up with just £122bn. Grow that same £100bn at 7 per cent a year and you end up more or less doubling it to £197bn over the same period.

The enormous power of compounding explains why HSBC's strong position in countries like China, Malaysia and India, where GDP is growing at 5 and 10 per cent a year, is worth so much more in the long run than stakes in the economies of the US, UK and western Europe, where growth is a more pedestrian 2 to 4 per cent.

With wealth per head of population reckoned to be no more than about \$720 in China, compared to \$29,600 in the US, there is no reason to suppose recent levels of growth should not continue for years if not decades. If current rates continue, China will

have the biggest economy in the world by the year 2020, meaning it is unlikely to be rocking the boat in Hong Kong.

The picture is actually brighter than these bald figures might suggest. In Latin America, where HSBC has acquired a leading position in the past year for about a third as much as it would have to pay for a second-tier such as Alliance & Leicester, the proportion of the population deemed to be even bankable is as low as 20 per cent. There is enormous scope for growth.

Accept that the bankable population in developing markets will grow faster than the economy as a whole, and throw in the propensity in a lot of Far Eastern markets for high levels of personal saving, and the outlook for HSBC begins to justify the seven-fold increase in its share price over the past five years. That, at any rate, is the theory. The ticklish question for Sir William is whether he can really afford to stand by and watch Midland become marginalised as the UK banking sector consolidates. Faced with the creation of another Lloyds TSB retail banking giant, HSBC's strategy could take a sharp temporary diversion.

Economic council is a verbal trick

As a finishing touch to all the dramatic changes he has made to the running of economic policy, Gordon Brown has named

the first two members of his Council of Economic Advisers. But the two experts, both highly respected in their fields, will not be working together, as the title "Council" suggests. Rather, they will advise different teams of Treasury officials on their separate areas of expertise.

Fair enough. The Treasury has for a long time sensibly drawn on outside talent in this way. But it means that this is a Council in name only, a verbal gimmick that will allow the Chancellor to live up to a high-falutin pre-election pledge.

The similarities with the US Council of Economic Advisors begin and end with the name. For the US version advises the President rather than his Treasury Secretary. It is an independent focus of economic advice semi-detached from government.

It is usually composed of very high-profile and independent-minded economists who can speak their own mind if they disagree with aspects of policy. They might not last in the job if they were too outspoken too often, but equally they are not lightly sacked.

The American CEA actually bears a closer resemblance to the Treasury's ill-fated panel of "wise persons", in that it publishes every year an annual report on the state of the economy and its future prospects. This report is taken as an authoritative assessment. However, it has a status the Treasury panel's reports never achieved because they were deliberately selected to disagree with

each other – or represent a wide range of views, as the official gloss put it.

Like the panel it replaces, our own new Council of Economic Advisors is clearly not meant to provide a heavyweight, cohesive commentary on the Government's economic policy in the same way as its US namesake. It is hard to resist the suspicion that, in fact, the last thing Mr Brown wants is any possibility of disagreement with his policies, especially from anybody with the status that established reputation brings.

Admittedly, BA has been buffeted by more than just poor employer relations. The continuing failure to receive regulatory approval for the alliance with American Airlines and the damage caused by the strength of sterling are at least as bad for sentiment.

But BA is to repeat the success it

achieved in the first decade after privatisation, then the business efficiency programme will be the key. One-off costs of £125m are small beer in comparison to potential benefits of £1bn.

The difficulties of saving money, new opportunities to spend it pop up. Although the efficiency programme is now two years old, the staff bill is rising, not falling or remaining static.

Launching a low-cost airline is not really the answer. BA has effectively been carrying out just such a policy by franchising out the name, livery and flight code to other airlines. Yesterday, but for the skill of a pilot, the dangers inherent in that strategy could have come home to roost too.

BA needs to boost its efficiency programme

British Airways management has spent a good deal of time circling around in the hope of burning off staff opposition to its business efficiency programme but sooner or later it had to crash land. The £125m bill BA has picked up following last month's three-day stoppage by cabin crew demonstrates that it is not just the airline's employees who are in for a bumpy ride. BA is to achieve its target of saving £1bn by the end of the decade.

It is extraordinary how quickly the costs can mount up when staff vote with their feet

Brown names economic advisers to the Treasury

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Gordon Brown yesterday announced the appointment of two experts to his long-promised "Council of Economic Advisers" at the Treasury.

Paul Gregg, an economist from the London School of Economics specialising in the jobs market and inequality, and Chris Wales, a tax partner from Arthur Andersen, will work with teams of Treasury officials.

Although the new Council is billed as a replacement to the disbanded Panel of Independent Experts, the experts will focus on separate areas of policy rather than offering advice as a group. Yesterday's announcement made it clear that the individual policy experts would work alongside separate Treasury teams on the Government's priority areas. Ed Balls, the special adviser

to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will continue to play a dominant role in economic policy. He has not formally been named chairman of the new Council and will co-ordinate economic policy as the Chancellor's main adviser.

Further outside appointments to the Council will be announced. Eventually there could be up to six experts brought in. In addition, the Treasury has not yet indicated whether or when Sir Alan Budd, its outgoing chief economic adviser, will be replaced. He is due to retire from the Treasury and move full-time to the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee in November.

Names in the frame for the top economics job in the Treasury have included Gavin Davies, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, and Professor Charles Bean of the London School of Economics, as well as Mr Balls. However, the ultimate

structure of advice remains unclear. The Treasury dismissed recent reports that Permanent Secretary Sir Terry Burnell will be replaced as "extremely speculative".

Paul Gregg will work part-time at the Treasury and part-time in his current position as Senior Research Associate at the LSE's Centre for Economic Performance. He will focus on the Government's welfare-to-work programme and the review of the tax and benefit system being co-ordinated by Barclays Bank chief executive Martin Taylor.

Mr Gregg is a specialist on job insecurity, poverty and movements into and out of unemployment. He co-authored research which established the fact, often quoted by the Chancellor, that one in five non-pensioner households in the UK does not have any body in work.

Chris Wales is a tax expert

who worked in Sweden from 1991 to 1995 as head of Arthur Andersen's international tax practice there. He has specialised in corporate tax issues, including the financing of takeovers, and is expected to concentrate on the Government's planned reform of company taxation. His clients have included big US and European multinationals.

The new Council of Economic Advisers has been billed as a parallel to the US body of the same name, but so far the similarity is confined to the name. The Treasury has for some years drawn on advice from outside economists, often part-time, on their particular areas of expertise.

Kenneth Clarke, the former chancellor, appointed Edward Troup, who has since moved to City law firm Simons & Simons as an adviser on taxation.

The Treasury's announce-



The new Council is to advise Number 11 on policy design

ment yesterday said the terms of reference for the new Council were: "To advise the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the design and implementation of policies for the achievement of the Government's economic objectives."

The first tentative signs yesterday that consumer spending was not after all getting out of control were not expected to carry much weight with the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee when it meets this week.

Analysts remained divided about whether or not the Bank will announce the fourth increase in the cost of borrowing in four months after its meeting ends on Thursday.

Halifax reported yesterday that house prices had remained almost flat last month, climbing only 0.1 per cent. The annual rate of increase slowed to 6.4 from 7.1 per cent in June.

Halifax said that the housing recovery would continue, describing the market as "well supported". But its downbeat figures contrasted with Nationwide's alternative measure. On Friday Nationwide said its house price index had jumped 1.8 per cent in July, with the annual rate picking up to 12.2 per cent.

A spokeswoman for Halifax claimed its rival's figures reflected a bias towards London and the South-east. But Nationwide said its figures were weighted to adjust for regional differences and were also more reliable because based on a bigger number of housing transactions than the Halifax measure.

With mixed signals on the housing market, a separate indicator yesterday pointed to slower growth in cash in circulation last month. The growth in the narrow money measure M0, of which cash forms the biggest component, eased to 5.9 from 6.2 per cent in June.

This was its slowest annual growth rate for 18 months. But economists were wary about drawing any conclusions for high street spending, as retail sales growth has picked up during this year even as narrow money growth has slowed.

Adam Cole, UK economist at James Capel, said consumers were spending on big ticket items which were unlikely to be paid for in cash. Analysts also pointed out that all other recent indicators of consumer spending had indicated booming demand. Yesterday's figures were not enough to change the minds of the Bank's experts if they wanted to raise interest rates.

Halifax data met with caution

Diane Coyle

IN BRIEF

German industrial output climbs

Industrial output in Germany bounced by 1.4 per cent in June, reversing a sharp fall in May. The Economics Ministry said there would be a "noticeable" upward revision to the latest figures in a few weeks' time. Economists said the figures indicated that recovery in Germany was on track, if not exactly robust, despite lacklustre domestic demand. Exports are driving the gains in output. According to the breakdown of the figures, construction output expanded by 6 per cent in June after a 4.9 per cent fall in May, while manufacturing output rose 1.2 per cent following a 1.3 per cent decline in May.

Shift in semiconductor market

Foreign companies secured a record 32.6 per cent share of Japan's semiconductor market during the first quarter of the year, according to US government figures. The previous record of 29.6 per cent was set in the fourth quarter of 1995. "This is evidence that market forces are at work," said US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky. A year ago the US and Japan reached a new agreement on semiconductors aimed at ensuring continued progress on market access and industry co-operation.

Birmingham buys mortgage portfolio

Birmingham Midshires Building Society, which has been widely rumoured to be in takeover talks with Royal Bank of Scotland, has bought £400m worth of commercial mortgage loans from UCB, part of the French-based Compagnie Bancaire. The price paid for the portfolio, which is valued on a multiple of the difference between the interest on the loans and the cost of financing and administering the portfolio, has not been disclosed, but is thought to be approximately £50m. The portfolio consists of just 1,300 loans, ranging from takeaway restaurants to nursing homes, with an average value of £350,000 each, and will double the society's commercial lending book to £920m. Over the past five years Birmingham Midshires has bought 18 mortgage portfolios with a total value of almost £4bn, including £1.3bn worth of loans bought from HYPO-MSL. It will now have a total loan book of £7.6bn, about 85 per cent of its residential mortgages.

Sedgwick links up with Nikols Brichtetto

Sedgwick Group is establishing a joint venture which will merge some of its risk services, insurance and reinsurance broking and employee benefits consulting operations with those of Nikols Brichtetto Group. The venture, which will be completed before the end of the year, will operate initially from offices in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia. Nikols will own 51 per cent of the venture and a representative of the Moratti family, which owns Securifin, will be represented on the board of Sedgwick. Financial details were not disclosed.

Zeneca's schizophrenia drug approved

Zeneca Group has received formal approval from the UK Medicines Control Agency to market Seroquel, its new antipsychotic for the treatment of schizophrenia. The approval follows last week's notification from the US Food and Drug Administration of the "approvable" status of Seroquel for the American market. Seroquel is Zeneca's first entry into the antipsychotic market. Zeneca's product range in the CNS therapeutic area includes treatments for migraine, epilepsy, anxiety and depression as well as anaesthetics. In 1996, sales in this area amounted to 16 per cent of Zeneca's total world-wide sales of pharmaceuticals of £4.35bn.

Newport launches hostile bid for Delny

Newport Holdings launched a hostile, all-share £9.6m takeover bid for the rival Delny property investment group. The basis of the bid is four new Newport ordinary shares for every three Delny shares, valuing each of the target's shares at 110p. Delny's shares climbed 17p to 98.5p. Newport said it believed the acquisition of Delny would provide a strong platform from which to expand its property portfolio and would provide shareholders with an opportunity to invest in a soundly managed company with a proven record of investment in quality commercial properties let on strong tenant covenants.

The architect of New Labour's economics

Diane Coyle reports on the career of Ed Balls, the most influential adviser on the Chancellor's team

Iosophy, Politics and Economics at Keble College, Oxford. He then went on to win a Kennedy Scholarship to study for two years at Harvard University.

Harvard has a strong claim to be the world's most elitist academy, as well as one of its best. And one of the priciest too – its fees are up to \$30,000 (£18,000) a year. Despite the cost, though, it does not quite achieve the same social ex-

cellence as Oxford. But it caps even Oxbridge for intellectual arrogance. The assumption that Harvard students are superior is added to the food in the canteens, delivered with the lectures and proven in the job market.

Students are lectured by people who have received the top of their professional tree, and the best – like Ed Balls – can work closely with academic superstars. In his case it was Lawrence Summers, a 42-year-old economist who is now a senior Clinton administration official.

Academics hold Mr Balls in very high regard, and his intellectual credibility has helped the Chancellor'

of the press office. Although clearly one head of press is enough, her sudden departure has not helped allay suspicions that rhetoric will continue to play too great a part in economic policy. Another frequent criticism is that Mr Balls lacks the long sweep of experience. Of course, this might just be the sour grapes of older and less successful economists.

But one thing that does put people off is his intellectual certainty. Until they feel the lash of his intellect, impatient with their slowness, people tend to like him. He has the politician's talent for flirtation and charm when he tries – with all accounts, the predictable effect on many of his female colleagues.

He swiftly learnt everyday political skills in Mr Brown's office, but the first thing everybody says about this Young Turk of the world of economic policy is that he is a good footballer. In the world of New Labour a lot is made of soccer affiliations. Ed supports Norwich and Arsenal.

More significantly, he plays in the amateur Thame League – for the Financial Times team. He did not sign for Labour's Red Menace team. Old Labourites read a lot into that. One of the Labour team's players draws the conclusion: "Gordon Brown has a tradition of taking activists and defeating them."

Mr Balls is a long-standing and committed Labour Party member. But it is the fact that he is New Labour through and through that cements his importance in the Treasury.

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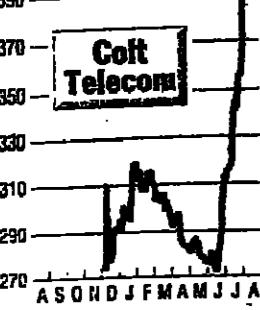
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Data Bank

FTSE 100	4895.7	-3.6
FTSE 250	4485.0	-3.4
FTSE 350	2346.8	-1.7
SEAC VOLUME	599,311 shares,	
	48,026 bargains	
Gilt's Index	97.01	-0.25

Share spotlight

share price, price



It seemed that market-makers had finally packed their bags for the summer yesterday, after a quiet day's trading which was only enlivened by two sets of dazzling corporate interim results.

Just 600 million shares changed hands across the market and Footsie wore off ground the other side of the 4,900 mark that it reached in early trading. It closed 3.6 points down at 4895.7, having touched 4,907.2 at one stage.

Pearson and HSBC Holdings stole most of the limelight, as both impressed with better-than-expected interim profits. Pearson climbed 26.5p after the company's chief executive, Marjorie Scardino, pledged to double its £4bn value within five years.

HSBC added as much as 120p at one time in the day, but the initial excitement wore off towards the close of play and it finished 44.5p better at 223.38.

A handful of financial stocks were dragged along in HSBC's wake. NatWest – which reports results today – climbed 10.5p to 870, and Standard Chartered improved 3.5p to close at £10.01.

But investors seemed to be heeding analysts' warnings that banks could be in line for a sharp correction, as others in the sector were not looking so flush.

Bank of Scotland was among the top Footsie fallers, shedding 15p to 430p. Abbey National also closed 15p poorer at 834.5p, after a feeling in the market that its results last week had not matched up to those of Lloyds and HSBC.

Declines in banking stocks in the US and Europe had also unnerved the financial sector, analysts said.

Among other blue chips, Bass added 8p to 842.5p despite JD Wetherspoon's decision to ban alcopops. ICI



MARKET REPORT

CATHY NEWMAN

firmed 5p to £10.20 on reports that a \$400m joint venture in Shanghai had been approved. And despite a bearish note from Société Générale, Rolls-Royce edged up 1p to 237p.

The biggest Footsie loser by far was British Airways, which plummeted by 30p to 610p after the company revealed that strikes by cabin crew would cost £125m in the first half of the year.

Pharmaceuticals, which have been up and down like a yo-yo in recent weeks, were back in the doldrums again after negative press comment over the weekend. Cortecs International ended 1p poorer at 151.5p after reports that a

competitor was developing a rival drug for osteoporosis. And despite Zeneca's announcement that its schizophrenia drug, Seroquel, had been approved, the company eased 16.5p to £20.02p.

Two drug minnows did buck the sector's downward trend, though. Shire Pharmaceuticals jumped 8p to 249.5p on news of its £113m acquisition of the US-based Richwood Pharmaceutical Company, and Oxford Molecular firmed 3.5p after its interim results pleased surprised analysts.

Water stocks were also on the slide yesterday, as traders continued to fret about the Government's decision at the

end of last week to refer Pacific Corp's bid for Energy Group to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. A bearish note from HSBC James Capel did not help matters, and analysts said investors were taking profits after a good run for the sector. Thames Water finished 9p off at 776.5p; Wessex Water dropped 16.5p to 462.5p; and Anglian Water joined the slippery slope, shedding 19.5p to 771.5p.

Among the second-liners, Telewest Communications was one of the best performers, after confirmation that it was in preliminary merger talks with NTL, the US cable company. Telewest added 4p to 83p.

While Telewest was on the rise, Flextech, the cable and satellite programme supplier, was floundering after a press report that its chief executive, Roger Luard, was to leave the company. Flextech issued a statement denying the story,

but it nevertheless ended 17p poorer at 469p.

Investors were also keen on Amersham International, which is shortly to announce the completion of the fusion of its biotechnology division with Pharmacia & Upjohn. The company has also increased its clout recently with the £1.8bn merger with Norway's Nycomed. Amersham rose 57.5p to £19.82.

Elsewhere, a sharp increase in pre-tax profits at Filtronic Comtek sent shares soaring 19p to 394p, buoyed by optimistic noises from Kleinwort Benson, Merrill Lynch, and its own house broker, Panmure Gordon. And an "add" note from NatWest nudged More Group up 2p to 593.5p.

Viglen, the personal computer company spun off from Amstrad, made its debut yesterday, placed at 72.5p. But it lost ground during the day, and closed 8p down at 64.5p.

Taking Stock

Regent Inns called time on its investment in Surrey Free Inns, selling its 5.5 per cent holding in the AIM-listed company for 465p a share. Regent, which jumped 13.5p to close at 278.5p, made £1.55m on the sale, and said it would use the cash to fund its expansion plans. Surrey Free Inns, which many industry observers had expected to become a bid target for Regent, lost 5p to 469p.

Colt Telecommunications surged 21p to an all-time high of 388.5p, on news that it had signed an interconnect agreement with France Telecom. The company, which is expected to complete a similar deal in Germany within a month, announces second-quarter results next week.

Dealers said heavy buying on Friday in the US – where Colt is quoted on Nasdaq – had also helped.

Category	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	PER	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	PER	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	PER
Alcoholic Beverages	Heublein	110.00	-1.00	4.00	27.5	Heublein	110.00	-1.00	4.00	27.5	Heublein	110.00	-1.00	4.00	27.5
Banks, Merchant	Barclays	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Barclays	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Barclays	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Banks, Retail	Barclays	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Barclays	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Barclays	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Breweries, Pubs & Restaurants	Heublein	110.00	-1.00	4.00	27.5	Heublein	110.00	-1.00	4.00	27.5	Heublein	110.00	-1.00	4.00	27.5
Building/Construction	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Building Materials	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Chemicals	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Electronics	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Distributors	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Diversified Industrials	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Engineering	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Food Manufacturers	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Health Care	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Household Goods	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Insurance	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
International	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Index-linked	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Undated	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Medicines	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Shorts	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Longs	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Government Securities	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Regulation	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Support Services	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Transport	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Textiles & Apparel	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Telecommunications	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Retailers, Food	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Retailers, General	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0	Amico	100.00	-1.00	4.00	25.0
Printing & Paper	Amico	100.00	-1.00												

Takeover talks at Country Casuals fall through

Andrew Yates

The fortunes of the troubled Country Casuals women's clothes retailer took another turn yesterday when the company admitted that takeover talks with a rival, believed to be the Alexon womenswear group, had fallen through and sent the share price into a spin.

"We're in discussions with a number of parties," said a spokesman. "We've had a number of offers, but we're not in a position to say who they are." The group, which has been the subject of numerous bid approaches over the past few years, now plans to remain independent. However, the announcement opens the door for Mark Bunce, a founder and former chief executive of the company, to relaunch a bid for the group.

Tom Adam, chairman of Country Casuals, indicated that the offer for the group was simply pitched too low. "Our principal shareholders felt that our company was worth more," he said.

Country Casuals is not in talks with Mr Bunce at the moment but Mr Adam did not rule out future takeover discussions.

Talks with Mr Bunce, who owns nearly 11 per cent of the company, collapsed in June when he failed to come up with a definite offer for the business and other groups indicated their interest in the company.

Mr Bunce and his wife, Christine, a fellow founder of Country Casuals, left the group by mutual agreement at the end of June, having earlier resigned from the board after rejecting Country Casuals' plans to sell Elvi and Lero, two loss-making subsidiaries, to management buyout teams. Mr Adam confirmed that Mr and Mrs Bunce had received compensation on leaving the group but declined to reveal how much they were paid.

Analysts speculate that Mr Bunce would have to offer more than 140p a share for the group. That is the price that former chairman John Shannon was willing to pay for the company when he launched an unsuccessful £27m hostile bid two years ago. But some observers

believe Mr Bunce may have difficulty in raising the sort of capital required to secure a takeover.

Mr Bunce was unavailable for comment yesterday.

Country Casuals will be left to concentrate on its core retail brand, which has had a chequered history in the past few years. Operating profits from this division fell from more than £3.5m in 1995 to £3.1m in the year to last January. "We didn't provide clothes that our customers wanted. We got it wrong. But we are confident about this year. Our new ranges have been well received," said Mr Adam yesterday. The company announced that like-for-like sales for the first six months to 26 July were running ahead 8 per cent on last year.

Country Casuals has been a poor performer since it was floated at 130p a share in 1992. Its share price slumped 20p to 113.5p on yesterday's news, valuing the group at less than £22m.

Silver Shield buys 80% stake in Swansea for £100

Swansea City is to become the latest football club to join the stock market, alongside the likes of Manchester United, Newcastle, Sunderland, and Aston Villa.

Silver Shield Group, the Coventry-based replacement windscreen company, announced yesterday it had signed a deal to buy 80 per cent of the club for just £100 and take over some £1.4m worth of debts.

Doug Sharpe, Swansea's chairman, has agreed to sell the stake through his holding company, Enterline, and will resign from the club's board after the deal goes through.

Robin Sharpe, chief executive, will stay on the board, joined by Neil McClure, Silver Shield's chairman.

Apart from the £100 purchase price for the stake, Silver Shield is paying £449,900 to take over loans and interest of £1.4m owned to another of Mr Sharpe's companies. Silver Shield is also paying £25,000 to cover loans to the club from Mal Griffiths, one of the directors.

To fund the deal Silver Shield, which came to the stock market in spring 1996, is raising £400,000 by issuing 11.4 million new shares at 3.5p each. The group's share price slipped yesterday from 4p to 3.75p on news of the proposed acquisition and the accompanying rights issue. One of Mr Sharpe's rights issue. One of Mr Sharpe's



Doug Sharpe: Will resign after the deal goes through

companies will pay £50,000 for 1.4 million shares, which it can not sell for a year.

Swansea City, which is managed by the ex-Liverpool midfielder, Jan Molby, plays in the third division of the Football League and narrowly missed promotion at the end of last season following a play-off at Wembley.

Mr McClure said he was attracted by the chance to build

an all-seat stadium and leisure complex close to the centre of Swansea which would provide added income for investors.

Mr McClure said he hoped negotiations on the stadium would be concluded in up to eight weeks. He explained: "We have been looking for some time for opportunities to acquire valuable assets at reasonable prices to add to our Silver Shield Screen subsidiary."

Company Results

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
BA (07)	2.22m (2.10m)	220m (150m)	15.3p (11.8p)	- (·)
Pharmavene (F)	48.6m (53.5m)	4.1m (3.2m)	6.52p (5.59p)	1.25p (1.0p)
HSBC (I)	- (·)	2.62m (2.32m)	65.53p (60.14p)	20p (15p)
Wesley Satellite (F)	- (·)	4.16m (2.84m)	18.1p (8.7p)	8.3p (8.3p)
New Legend Capital (F)	- (·)	6.52m (3.85m)	6.8p (4.64p)	6.0p (6.0p)
Orford Electronics (H)	1,000 (-)	-1.25m (-)	2.3p (-)	- (·)
Orford Molecular (I)	8.17m (4.35m)	-977,000 (-250,000)	-1.1p (-1.7p)	- (·)
Pearson (I)	957.8m (936.8m)	80.7m (30.2m)	11.1p (2.8p)	7.5p (-)
Zetelcom (I)	12.08m (10.56m)	4.025m (3.053m)	7.8p (5.8p)	2.2p (2.0p)
(F) Final (I) Interim (H) Nine months				

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Scardino's grand vision is blurry

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

Majorie Scardino, Pearson's new chief executive, has outlined her grand vision for the future. She wants to achieve double-digit earnings per share growth every year and to double the value of the company over the next five years, no less. That looks easier said than done.

For a start, despite years of reshaping, Pearson remains a sprawling conglomerate spanning leisure businesses such as Madame Tussauds and Alton Towers, a plethora of TV and publishing interests and even an investment bank, Lazard. The synergies between these businesses appear few and far between and Pearson continues to be run more like a quasi-investment trust than an actively managed company.

Ms Scardino's answer is to overhaul Pearson's structure and integrate the remaining businesses. But specific plans are thin on the ground. Businesses will go, although she will not say which, and acquisitions are on the cards, although she will not say where. Ms Scardino will also have her work cut out to address Pearson's poor margins. In all of its three main divisions, information, education and entertainment, Pearson's margins are at least five percentage points below its peers.

That said, Ms Scardino has got off to an encouraging start. Pre-tax profits for the six months to June have jumped from £50m to £91m. The figures were muddied by £18.6m worth of write-offs last year at Mindscape, Pearson's troubled US software business, and this year by start-up losses at Channel 5, in which Pearson has a 24 per cent stake, and a £5.9m hit from the strong pound.

Even so, underlying operating profits almost doubled to £65.5m from £33.5m, thanks to a strong performance from the *Financial Times*. The print paper's circulation is up and it plans to capture a chunk of the US market.

Of course Pearson still has more than its fair share of problem businesses. Mindscape, its most disastrous acquisition of recent years, is still losing money hand over fist and a fraud unearthed this year at Penguin's US publishing division will cost £100m. However both these potential disasters appear to be under control. Mindscape could make a profit in the second half and Penguin's new management has swung into action to limit damage.

Ms Scardino's confident statement helped push the shares up 26.5p to 692.5p yesterday. Analysts forecast current year profits of around £300m, putting the shares on a prospective p/e

ratio of 19. It is difficult to value Pearson until more of Ms Scardino's plans are known. If Pearson can meet her targets, the shares look cheap. But until her new strategy becomes clearer the shares remain fairly priced for now.

Shire focuses on buying Richwood

Shire Pharmaceuticals' chief executive Rolf Stahel is not one to let the grass grow under his feet. Less than six months after forking out up to \$100m (£62m) for the acquisition of Pharmavene, a US drug development company, Shire is proposing to pay as much as \$186m for Richwood Pharmaceutical, another US pharmaceuticals group, whose main products are "treatments" for unruly children.

Richwood's sales should hit \$40m this year, with profits, already warnant at \$7.5m for the latest half-year, set to soar accordingly. Even though market growth has slowed to around a third of the 20 to 30 per cent typical of the recent past, owning the fastest-growing drug in the category clearly has exciting potential.

But it is not without its risks. Treating a behavioural problem with drugs remains controversial and, because their old patents have expired, Richwood's products are potentially exposed to competition.

Shire has convincing answers to these questions, while Richwood's 65-

Pearson: At a glance

Market value: £3.97bn, share price 692.5p

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1997
Five-year record					
Turnover (£bn)	1.59	2.10	2.32	2.62	2.62
Pre-tax profit (£m)	298	365	357	30	81
Earnings per share (p)	46.4	50.0	50.0	7.5	7.5
Dividends per share (p)	15.0	18.5	18.0	8.8	7.5
Operating profit					
Share price					
Half-year to	30 June 1997	30 June 1996			
Profit before tax	£2,623m	£2,321m			
Profit attributable to shareholders	£1,757m	£1,586m			
Earnings per share	65.93p	60.14p			
Dividends per share	20.00p	15.00p			
Capital resources	£24,504m	£23,403m			

Galaxy chief ousted without payoff

Clifford German

The chief executive of Galaxy Media Corporation has been ousted after a change of strategy brought about since the appointment of Robert Stigwood, the impresario, as non-executive chairman a couple of months ago.

John Webber, who only became the executive head of the television programme maker and entertainment business last October, is not receiving any compensation for loss of office.

His departure was the result of a significant shift in the company's planned future development, said Christopher Moran, the company's vice-chairman, leading shareholder, and the well-known former Lloyd's name.

Mr Stigwood, a long-standing friend of Mr Moran, also stands to become a significant shareholder after having been granted options over 350,000 shares. The company has 3.5 million shares in issue, and exercise of the options would give Mr Stigwood a 9 per cent stake in the company.

Galaxy said it would concentrate on its interests in film, TV, music and stage promotions, and added that the business of managing sports events and artists which Mr Webber brought into the company when he joined Galaxy would be retained.

Mr Webber, a former vice-chairman of Mark McCormick's International Management Group, injected his own BM International business interests and bought 150,000 shares at 135p when he joined the company last year.

The share price closed unchanged at 160p on the Seat market yesterday, valuing the company, which has yet to make a profit, at around £5.6m.

Galaxy paid Mr Webber, who did not have a contract entitling him to compensation, a consultancy fee of £55,000 a year and a profit-related bonus which lapses with his departure. Mr Webber went on holiday last Friday and his future plans are unknown, according to his spokeswoman yesterday.

Galaxy was created from a reverse takeover of CSC Investment Trust by Mike Mansfield Television less than two years ago. Mr Moran owns about 29 per cent of the company, Mr Mansfield about 15 per cent.

First half 1997 over first half 1996

- Pre-tax profit up 13% and attributable profit up 11%
- Pre-tax profit up 21% and attributable profit up 19% in Hong Kong dollars
- Earnings per share up 10%
- Dividends per share up 33%
- Total capital ratio 14.2% and tier 1 capital ratio 9.4%

The 1997 Interim Report will be sent to shareholders on Friday, 15 August 1997 and copies may be obtained from Group Public Affairs at the address below.

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strong salesforce will be useful for selling Pharmavene's products and will bring useful cash flow and earnings.

Even if competition means Richwood's sales will peak by 2000, Lehman Brothers reckons Shire could be boasting profits of £11m in the year and puts an underlying value of 400p on the shares. Up 8p to 249.5p, they are good value.

Market ready to forgive Filtronic

Filtronic Comtek, a maker of hi-tech parts for mobile telephones, well illustrates the dangers of investing in small companies. After a storming first year on the stock market, the company's heavy reliance on one customer, namely Motorola, has sent the company and its shares into a flat spin.

The problem centred on the code division multiple access technology on which Motorola has based its latest generation of digital mobile telephones. First technical hitches and now financing problems have slowed adoption of the technology in the huge US market. Given that half Filtronic's sales are made to Motorola, it was hardly surprising the delay should lead to two profits warnings last year and an absence of first-half profits. Since then the group has gone on to lose its new chief executive, Greg Hey-Shipton.

But the market seems to be in a mood to forgive and forget, marking the shares up 19p to 394p yesterday after Filtronic unveiled pre-tax profits up a quarter to £4.06m for the year to May.

The figures were in line with analysts' reduced expectations, but more importantly, the company remains bullish about the future. Orders have nearly doubled over the year to £24.7m and have since risen to £37m, nearly 80 per cent of last year's sales. Forecasts suggest the number of mobile phone subscribers could rise by 2.5 times to 500 million by 2002, yet analysts reckon Filtronic still has a lowly 6 to 7 per cent of its addressable market of around \$1bn.

business

Wall Street is heading for a different kind of crash

The markets may have taken low inflation into account but **Mark Brown** and **Gareth Williams** warn a reduction in growth rates could cause problems

Since the beginning of 1995 share prices on Wall Street have more than doubled while the UK equity market has risen 60 per cent. The only previous times Wall Street had risen so far so rapidly were in the mega-bull markets of 1927-1929 and 1985-1987. The chart shows the striking similarity between the three periods. Both of the earlier episodes ended in disaster for investors, particularly the 1927-29 bull market, following which share prices eventually halved. While there is a significant risk that history repeats itself again and Wall Street takes a tumble before the year-end, this bull market is not characterised by a bubble in equity valuations in the same way as before.

Judged in isolation the US stock market is now just as fundamentally expensive, and, hence, in just as dangerous territory, as during the two previous mega-bull phases, if not more so. In relation to any form of absolute shareholder value – dividends, earnings, cash flow, book values – share prices are as high or higher than they were just before the October 1987 crash. However, in both 1929 and 1987, the distortion in US and UK equity prices could be seen most clearly in the relationship between long-term interest rates or bond yields and equity valuations. This is not the case this time around.

Superficially, the current bond yield to dividend yield relationship in the US does appear to be in dangerous territory. However, relative valuations appear neutral if account is taken of the decline in the pay-out ratio in the US to a record low. In the UK, too, relative equity-bond valuation measures remain firmly in neutral territory, with a yield ratio of 2 times compared to 3.3 times just before the 1987 crash.

It may be, therefore, that current equity valuations are justified by today's lower interest rates. When rates come down the return on keeping money in the bank falls. In these circumstances investors should value a given level of future earnings more highly.

Bond yields may be thought of as having two components: an element which is necessary to compensate investors for what they think inflation is going to be, and the real interest

rate. Arguably, equities should be more concerned with real interest rates because higher prices should partially feed through into higher profits and dividends. Empirical research confirms that this is the case.

This brings us to possibly the main distortion in global financial markets at the present time. Real bond yields have recently fallen below the levels seen in late 1993 to their lowest level since the 1970s. This owes much to the situation in Japan, where real bond yields have tumbled from around 5 per cent at the start of the decade to under 1 per cent currently, although real yields outside Japan have fallen in equally dramatic fashion recently.

Sub-normal rates in Japan reflect its lack of appetite or inability to spend. In effect, Japan's excess savings are financing the rest of the world's financial markets, both bonds and equities. In this way, the current climate resembles that prevalent in the run-up to the bond-market crash of February 1994, when inflation risks were relatively low. A synchronised pick-up in economic activity, or expectations thereof, would soak up excessive liquidity and cause real yields to rise. This would cause problems for equities even if it were not accompanied by a pick-up in inflation.

As for inflation, the process of economic and technological change in the 1990s has been inherently disinflationary. Costs have been stripped out of all stages of the pro-

duction process. Products and services are increasingly manufactured and sold on a world-wide basis, with the result that the competitive pressure to keep prices down has intensified. These changes have come on the back of 1980s measures to weaken the power of workers. The waves of global mergers and alliances currently taking place in the financial services, telecommunications, transport and defence sectors are a response to these trends. New technology too has played its part.

Greenspan's Humphrey-Hawkins testimony discussed at length the impact on US productivity caused by computer and telecommunications technology, which may now have matured enough to genuinely add value. In as much as these productivity and margin gains are real and permanent, the rise of the US equity market in response is rational.

The other great sea change in the 1990s has been the change in the conduct of fiscal and monetary policy. Both the US and Europe have tightened fiscal policy. In the US, politicians seem intent on balancing the budget. The single-currency project has had a similar effect in Europe. This has reduced the supply of debt and, hence, both real yields and inflation expectations. The latter effect has been strengthened by the growing influence and independence of central banks.

However, even if markets are right to believe in low inflation and

low real yields, it is less clear that they have factored in the concomitant reduction in long-run growth rates. When nominal growth in the economy is only 5-6 per cent it is asking a lot of technology-inspired productivity improvements to produce the 10-15 per cent earnings growth required to satisfy current consensus expectations. This is particularly so when labour-cost pressures are rising, albeit modestly.

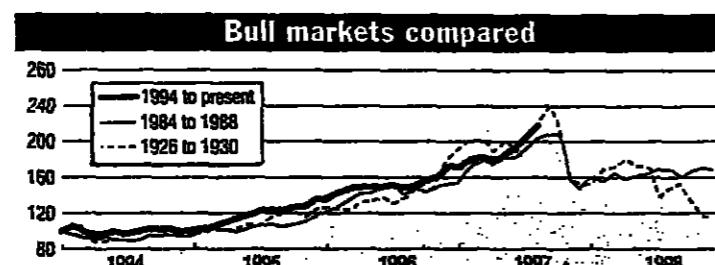
It should also be noted that technological change is a negative for those companies whose capital is rendered obsolete as a result. This may be why, despite all the technical progress, there is little evidence of any productivity revolution in the official data. It is also the case that the recent performance in US profits can still be explained by a pretty standard cyclical rise in profit share and margins.

One does not have to rely on airy-fairy theories about productivity miracles. In this respect the current bull case in the US certainly echoes that in the UK in 1987 when share valuations were justified on the basis of a significant improvement in potential economic growth which failed to materialise.

This cautious view on earnings would carry even more weight if standard earnings estimates in the US are not fully capturing the dilutive effect of the growing use of share options in employee remuneration – which is probably the case. In this way US companies are simply storing up problems for the future.

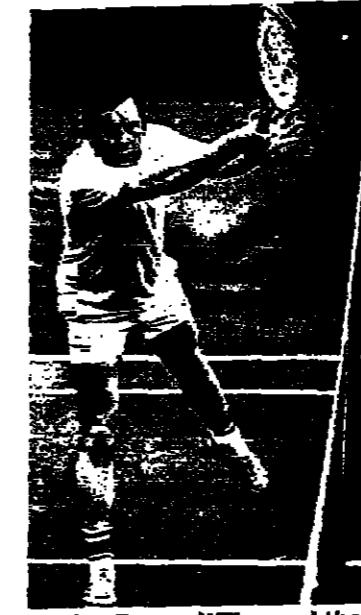
Unlike 1929 and 1987, current US equity ratings may be justified by the current low level of bond yields, particularly in real terms. Nevertheless, while markets may have correctly taken on board the implications of low inflation, it is less clear that they have factored in the concomitant reduction in long-run growth rates. A crash of previous proportions would require the double whammy of a rise in real bond yields from their current historic low together with a knock to growth expectations. A very possible, if not probable, combination.

Mark Brown and Gareth Williams are equity strategists at ABN Amro Hause Govett.



Tennis anyone? City clears out for the summer holidays

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Gordon Brown will pound the asphalt at Cape Cod

Ms Scardino's comments had to vie with the screening yesterday of some climactic moments in *Grundy TV*, one of the stations owned by Pearson. One such epic moment included the wedding of Scott and Charlene in *Neighbours*, played by Kylie Minogue and Jason Donovan, as well as a dodgy German version of another soap, *Sons and Daughters*. It's all a long way away from Ms Scardino's original foothold in the Pearson empire at *The Economist*.

Mind you, everything seems to be televised these days. I hear Mervyn King will present the Bank of England's inflation report next month with a TV camera crew on hand.

Birmingham City Football Club has appointed David Gold as chairman following the retirement of Jack Wiseman. Mr Wiseman will take up the non-executive role of vice-chairman and will continue to be actively involved with the club.

Mr Gold and his brother, Ralph, own a big chunk of the club and have built quite a business empire since emerging from the East End of London. They recently launched their own executive airline based at Biggin Hill, the old Battle of Britain aerodrome, in Kent. They are thought to be worth well over £200m.

Rio Tinto has appointed two new non-executive directors, and they're both card-carrying members of the great and the good: Sir Richard Sykes, chairman and chief executive of Glaxo Wellcome, and Lord Tugendhat, chairman of Abbey National. Lord Tugendhat is famous for knowing virtually everyone that matters, having been an MP, a big cheese at the Civil Aviation Authority and a grand fromage in the European Union. Most impressive, I think, is the fact that he wrote a book in 1986 entitled *Making Sense of Europe*. If only someone would.

John Willcock

hosted Pearson's results conference in the company's swanky new TV headquarters off Tottenham Court Road, London, in a TV studio usually used to shoot the light entertainment programme *Give us a Clue*.

This game show features celebs such as Lionel Blair and Una Stubbs acting out charades to other survivors. Yesterday the *Give us a Clue* signs had to be removed from sight, lest they give the wrong impression of Pearson's new strategy, which involves doubling in size over the next five years. Ms Scardino said: "We thought it would be inappropriate to have the *Give us a Clue* logo behind us as we announced these results."

Incidentally, Pearson's new cathedral-like complex for telly was originally supposed to cost £15m and ended up at £40m. Ms Scardino has taken this on the chin. She confided to me yesterday that she'd already bought 10,000 shares in Pearson at 749p when she became chief executive of the company. The shares now stand at 692.5p so she's sitting on a theoretical loss, but she insists she's planning to buy more shares.

John Willcock

Interest Rates

Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
UK	8.75%	6.75%	10.25%	8.50%	US	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
France	3.00%	2.50%	3.45%	2.50%	Belgium	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Germany	3.03%	2.95%	3.21	2.95%	Canada	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
France	3.03%	2.95%	3.21	2.95%	Switzerland	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
UK	2.75%	2.12%	18.07	2.75%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Japan	12.20%	10.40%	13.21	12.20%	Switzerland	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
ECU	15.93%	13.51	18.10	15.93%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Belgium	6.25%	5.25%	14.47	6.25%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
UK	15.42%	13.50	17.15	15.42%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Netherlands	3.42%	3.05	3.93	3.42%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Netherlands	3.42%	3.05	3.93	3.42%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
UK	12.28%	8.2	14.48	12.28%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Norway	12.35%	10.50	12.90	12.35%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Sweden	1.09%	1.05	1.10	1.09%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Switzerland	2.48%	1.10	3.42	2.48%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Australia	2.07%	3.94	3.94	2.07%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Hong Kong	4.29%	3.41	12.43	4.29%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Malta	4.29%	3.41	12.43	4.29%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
New Zealand	2.53%	2.85	6.77	2.53%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Saudi Arabia	6.16%	3.73	12.10	7.05%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%
Singapore	2.32%	4.94	6.34	2.32%	UK	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%	5.25%

Bond Yields

Yields calculated on local basis.

Source: *Financial Times* Money Market Rates

Yield calculated on local basis.

Money Market Rates

Country	5yr	6mo	6mo	6mo	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
UK	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%
Australia	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Canada	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
China	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Egypt	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%
Finland	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%
Greece	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%
India	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%
Kuwait	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Malta	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
New Zealand	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Singapore	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Saudi Arabia	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Singapore	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Singapore	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Singapore	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Singapore	4.0%	4.0%						

Global recognition the aim of a galloping gourmet

Richard Edmondson talks to Olivier Peslier, a jockey searching for the finer things in life

The French town of Cossé-Quivion lies in the region of Anjou, Touraine and Maine, which is famous for its eels and crayfish, fine white wines, and orchards full of primeurs, the baby vegetables which find their way into the finest Parisian homes.

The tastes of its most famous son go far beyond the home-grown produce, however. "I have eaten kangaroo, crocodile, alligator, snake and ostrich, which tastes like beef and chicken together," Olivier Peslier, the French champion jockey, says. "And of course I have eaten horse. It's good."

Peslier then not only bites the hand that feeds him. He also chews and swallows it. It is his great good fortune that the species is stocked by bad commentators, because horses run for Peslier despite his appetite for chomping through their family. In fact, they run for him like few men alive.

The 27-year-old has this season taken the same journey as the William The Conqueror cruise line once navigated with similar results.

He has completed almost a century of rides in Britain this campaign during the recesses of the French programme, 17 of them winners at a strike-rate of 36 per cent. A £1 level stake on each of his mounts

would have yielded a profit of over £60, a statistic propped up by Royal Ascot winners at 33-1, 20-1 and 16-1.

This French produce clearly travels well, unlike compatriots of the past who found so much trouble on our racecourses that they might be have been supplied with saddles incorporating an airbag.

Peslier is different. He is in a rush to be understood both in and out of the saddle. His attempt at our foreign language is energetic rather than precise, but it is considerably better than Pat Eddery's French. Come to think of it, it is better than Pat Eddery's English.

"I am riding in England for my experience," Peslier says. "I want to ride everywhere in the world. And if I can ride good horses here it's easier for everyone when the horse comes to France."

"It's not easier for a French jockey riding here than the other way round because the pace of the gallop is more regular. The best horse usually wins, but in France it is much slower and more tactical."

"As well, people don't realise how different it is here. There are many journalists,

newspapers and television channels discussing racing. In France we have *Paris-Turf* and that is about it."

A by-product of the Republic's apathy towards the sport of the figures they headed is that Peslier wanders unrecognised in his homeland. When, on occasions, a bunch of dark-haired people

recognise him but they think I am his driver.

"I like the English jockeys because they try hard and they are used to riding everywhere in the world. The American jockeys ride only in America. I like Michael Kline and Frankie Dettori, but a lot of jockeys are good on their day. Even the very best jockeys make mistakes and it is impossible to be a jockey and not make a mistake occasionally."

Peslier's luxurious Chantilly home must have seemed a world away for the stone-mason's son. Certainly the estate agent thought so, and when Peslier first completed his inspection of the premises he was asked when his parents were going to arrive.

Dettori is now a regular visitor and when he turns up it seems right to open a bottle of Chateau Margaux '83 from the host's 400-strong cellar. "You can pay £100 a bottle in the shops for some wines, but I have a good friend in St Emilion, near Bordeaux, and he buys for me," Peslier explains.

"When I walk down the Champs-Elysees with Yutaka Take all the Japanese tourists

point expensive camera equipment in his direction there is another at his side they have their sights on.

"Everybody seems to know the jockeys here and I think I'm more famous in England than I am in France," the rider says.

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good bottle with a good friend. I have a lot of bottles. I like very good wine. It tastes good with something like pheasant."

As he talks about food and drink Peslier gives a typically Gallic action, making a cluster of his fingers and then kissing them. This is not a gesture you see here in a fish and chip shop or on a building site after the corned beef doorsteps have been removed from greaseproof paper.

Life is good for Peslier, whose daughter Megane will be two in September. He shares his life with Marie, a television reporter who had quite an effect on the decrepit rutting stags of the Channel 4 presentation team when she appeared with them on 2,000 Guineas morning back in May.

Her husband has already won an Irish Derby, a Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe and, this season, a Prix du Jockey Club (French Derby) on Peintre Celebre. It seems there will be plenty more where they came from if Olivier Peslier maintains the extraordinary link he seems to be able to forge with racehorses all around the world.

And remember, when you see him whipping a horse in a finish there is no malicious intent in mind. He is just tenderising them.



Dab hand: Another victory for Olivier Peslier

Photograph: Gareth Watkins/Reuters

Five-timer for McCoy at Newton Abbot

Tony McCoy took Newton Abbot by storm yesterday afternoon when booting home a second career five-timer at odds of 120-1.

The reigning champion jockey was successful aboard the Martin Pipe-trained quartet Commandante, Couchant, Totally Yours and Pond House. His other success was on Nashata, saddled by Karl Burke in the opening race.

Jack Berry yesterday warned against cutting the number of fixtures with the "too much racing" debate once again on the agenda.

John Gosden has spear-headed renewed calls for a reduction in the number of fixtures since the 1998 Fixture List was published last month with an increase of 14 meetings.

But Cockerham, trainer Berry, who regularly has numbers as at least 100 of Flat racing, said:

"You have to be very careful about calling for less fixtures – it keeps jockeys, trainers and stablehands in a job and most of them love it."

"We're in work which is something to be grateful for and I don't know if you can change things now. If people don't want to go to the meetings, they don't have to. Don't forget, too, that the locals love it."

John O'Shea, who has enjoyed success during the summer jumping programme, said:

"I think there is an important market place out there for trainers who haven't got 100 horses. It's easy to say there's too much racing when you can go out and spend £70,000

on a horse but the race planners have got to cater for everybody."

Gosden criticised the fixture list for "perpetuating bad horses" but O'Shea said: "Certainly in the summer jumping campaign I can't recall any bad or easy races – it's been very successful with stable hands for competitive races you have to consider the opposite end of the scale from the big-trainers. We have our owners to cater for and they want to run their horses."

Roy Bowring, who trains near Southwell's all-weather track, said: "For me, racing at Southwell is fantastic – it pro-

vides opportunities for the lower grade horses, especially when the ground is frozen."

But he also called for a "rest day", particularly when racing takes place on a Sunday. "I think it is absolutely ridiculous that stable staff are having to work seven days a week and it does seem to me that Monday should be a blank day when there has been racing on a Sunday," he said.

But Berry disagreed. "At the moment, lads get alternative weekends off," he said. "It'd be absolutely pointless them being at home on a Monday when their families were out at work."

RACING'S FUTURES MARKET

Ebor Handicap (1m 5f 194yds)			
Horse (Trainer)	Corral	Wilkens Hill	Ludlow
1. 05/00 1. 05/00 1. 05/00 1. 05/00	6-1	6-1	6-1
2. 05/00 2. 05/00 2. 05/00 2. 05/00	10-1	10-1	10-1
3. 05/00 3. 05/00 3. 05/00 3. 05/00	11-1	11-1	11-1
4. 05/00 4. 05/00 4. 05/00 4. 05/00	12-1	12-1	12-1
5. 05/00 5. 05/00 5. 05/00 5. 05/00	13-1	13-1	13-1
6. 05/00 6. 05/00 6. 05/00 6. 05/00	14-1	14-1	14-1
7. 05/00 7. 05/00 7. 05/00 7. 05/00	15-1	15-1	15-1
8. 05/00 8. 05/00 8. 05/00 8. 05/00	16-1	16-1	16-1
9. 05/00 9. 05/00 9. 05/00 9. 05/00	17-1	17-1	17-1
10. 05/00 10. 05/00 10. 05/00 10. 05/00	18-1	18-1	18-1
11. 05/00 11. 05/00 11. 05/00 11. 05/00	19-1	19-1	19-1
12. 05/00 12. 05/00 12. 05/00 12. 05/00	20-1	20-1	20-1
13. 05/00 13. 05/00 13. 05/00 13. 05/00	21-1	21-1	21-1
14. 05/00 14. 05/00 14. 05/00 14. 05/00	22-1	22-1	22-1
15. 05/00 15. 05/00 15. 05/00 15. 05/00	23-1	23-1	23-1
16. 05/00 16. 05/00 16. 05/00 16. 05/00	24-1	24-1	24-1
17. 05/00 17. 05/00 17. 05/00 17. 05/00	25-1	25-1	25-1
18. 05/00 18. 05/00 18. 05/00 18. 05/00	26-1	26-1	26-1
19. 05/00 19. 05/00 19. 05/00 19. 05/00	27-1	27-1	27-1
20. 05/00 20. 05/00 2			

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ECOTONE

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THE INDEPENDENT

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

When the new league season opens on August 9th a vast array of footballing talent will be on parade for the first time. Arsenal and Chelsea have been the busiest clubs in the overseas market, with Marc Overmars the most expensive recruit. The two London clubs can be expected to mount a strong challenge. Liverpool and Newcastle United will also be fighting for the title. However, Alex Ferguson's men will again be the team to beat. With the signings of Teddy Sheringham and Celso Silva from Brazil they are again the bookmakers' favourites to win the title.

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FORMATION B. 4-3-3

4 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 3 Strikers

FORMATION C. 5-3-2

5 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

FORMATION D. 3-5-2

3 Defenders, 5 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

Once you have chosen your formation and team name pick your team of 11 players and 1 manager from the list below. Players can only play in the positions that they are listed under and their total value must not go over £40 million. Having made a note of your team dial our registration hotline. Please try to use a tone dial telephone - one which makes tone noises when you dial, although pulse telephones can be used to register your team.



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HOW TO SCORE

player scores

clean sheet

winning goal

successful assist

-1 yellow card

-3 red card

manager's team wins

draw

Every time one of your players score you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point awarded in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful assist, a pass judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the outcome is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

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INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)
GOALKEEPERS														
300 Seaman	Ars	4.0	455 Cox	Bol	2.5	560 Lundekvam	Sou	1.2	679 Sharpe	Lee	3.5	845 Whelan	Cov	3.0
303 Lukic	Ars	1.0	456 Elliot	Bol	3.0	563 Scales	Tot	5.4	680 Ribeiro	Lee	1.5	846 Huckerby	Cov	3.5
304 Manninger	Ars	3.0	458 Taggart	Bol	2.0	564 Campbell	Tot	4.0	683 Haaland	Lee	2.5	847 Solveldt	Cov	1.5
305 Bosnich	AV	4.0	459 Bergsson	Bol	1.5	565 Calderwood	Tot	2.9	684 Parker	Lei	2.5	848 Lightbourne	Cov	1.5
306 Oakes	AV	1.5	460 Duberry	Chel	3.0	566 Austin	Tot	2.2	685 Lizzett	Lei	1.6	849 Dyer	Cry	2.0
307 Watson	Bar	1.0	463 Petrescu	Che	3.0	567 Edinburgh	Tot	1.6	687 Lennon	Lei	3.2	850 Freedman	Cry	2.0
308 Lesse	Bar	1.0	464 Lambourde	Che	3.0	568 Carr	Tot	1.2	688 Guppy	Lei	1.7	853 Ndah	Cry	1.0
309 Flowers	Bla	5.2	465 Leboeuf	Che	5.0	569 Mabbott	Tot	1.5	689 Barnes	Liv	3.0	854 Shipperley	Cry	2.0
310 Filan	Bla	1.5	466 Sinclair	Che	2.5	570 Dicks	WH	3.5	690 Redknapp	Liv	5.2	855 Ward	Der	2.5
311 Branagan	Bol	1.2	467 Daish	Cov	2.7	573 Reiper	WH	2.7	691 Sturridge	Der	5.0	856 Sturridge	Der	5.0
312 De Goey	Che	1.0	468 Shaw	Cov	2.2	574 Hall	WH	3.0	693 McManaman	Liv	5.9	857 Wanchope	Der	3.0
313 Grodas	Che	1.0	469 Burrows	Cov	2.2	575 Potts	WH	1.5	694 Thomas	Liv	3.0	858 Ferguson	Eve	6.5
314 Ogrizovic	Cov	2.2	470 Haworth	Cov	1.5	576 Ferdinand	WH	2.5	695 Leonhardsen	Liv	4.0	859 Barnby	Eve	4.5
315 Hedman	Cov	1.0	471 Edworthy	CP	1.5	577 Impey	WH	2.2	696 Giggs	Man	7.4	860 Deane	Lee	3.0
316 Nash	CP	1.0	472 Gordon	CP	2.0	578 Turner	WH	2.0	697 Beckham	Man	7.0	863 Lille	Lee	1.5
317 Day	CP	1.0	473 Muscat	CP	1.0	579 Perry	WH	4.0	698 Keane	Man	7.0	864 Hasselbank	Lee	3.0
318 Poom	Der	1.2	474 Tuttle	CP	2.0	580 Cunningham	WH	1.5	699 Butt	Man	7.0	865 Claridge	Lei	3.5
319 Houl	Der	1.6	475 Linighan	CP	2.0	581 Thacher	WH	2.0	700 Poborski	Man	3.5	866 Heskey	Lei	5.5
320 Southall	Eve	3.0	476 Hreidresson	CP	1.0	582 McAllister	WH	1.5	703 Lee	New	3.6	867 Fowler	Liv	9.5
321 Gerrard	Eve	1.5	477 Stimac	Der	3.3	583 Kimble	WH	1.5	704 Batty	New	3.8	868 Berger	Liv	4.0
322 Martyn	Lee	3.3	478 C Powell	Der	1.8	584 Kinsella	WH	2.0	705 Gillespie	New	2.5	869 Owen	Liv	2.5
323 Beeney	Lee	1.2	479 Laursen	Der	1.5	585 Kinsella	WH	2.0	706 Beardsley	New	2.0	870 Scholes	Man	6.0
324 Keller	Lei	2.5	480 Erario	Der	2.5	586 Platt	Ar	2.5	707 Ketsbara	New	2.0	871 Cole	Man	6.2
325 Poole	Lei	1.5	481 Phelan	Der	1.9	587 Parlour	Ar	2.4	708 Binkler	SW	2.5	872 Solskjaer	Man	7.0
326 James	Liv	3.5	482 Wright	Short	3.0	588 Vieira	Ar	4.5	709 Hyde	SW	1.8	873 Sheringham	Man	5.0
327 Warner	Liv	1.0	483 Watson	Ev	2.7	589 Overmars	Ar	6.0	710 Whittingham	SW	1.7	874 Nevland	Man	2.0
328 Schmeichel	Man	5.5	484 Unsworth	Ev	3.0	590 Rodriguez	Ar	2.0	711 Carbone	SW	3.0	875 Shearer	New	10.0
329 Van Der Gouw	Man	1.2	485 Hinchcliffe	Ev	3.5	591 Townsend	AV	3.2	712 Magilton	Sou	2.4	876 Asprilla	New	7.4
330 Given	New	2.5	486 Bllic	Ev	4.0	592 Draper	AV	4.1	713 Slater	Sou	1.5	877 Ferdinand	New	5.0
331 Hislop	New	2.5	487 Kelly	Lee	3.6	593 Draper	Ar	2.5	714 Oakley	Sou	1.2	878 Tomasson	New	4.0
332 Pressman	SW	3.0	488 Wetherall	Lee	2.5	594 Marcelle	Bar	2.0	715 Anderson	Tot	6.0	879 Gudjonsson	New	2.0
333 Taylor	Sou	1.8	489 Molenaar	Lee	2.5	595 Bullock	Bar	1.2	716 Howells	Tot	3.2	880 Humphreys	She	2.5
334 Beasant	Sou	1.0	490 Dorigo	Lee	1.2	596 Fransden	Bar	1.5	717 Bishop	WH	2.5	881 Booth	She	3.5
335 Walker	Tot	3.4	491 Robertson	Lee	2.5	597 Redfearn	Bar	1.2	718 Berkovic	WH	2.5	882 Hirst	She	3.5
336 Walker	Tot	1.0	492 Walsh	Lei	2.2	598 Eaden	Bar	1.2	719 Jones	WH	3.0	883 Le Tissier	Sou	7.0
337 Bardzen	Tot	1.0	493 Whitlow	Lei	1.2	599 Tinkler	Bar	1.0	720 Earle	Wim	3.1	884 Evans	Sou	1.5
338 Miklosko	WH	1.5	494 Wilholt	Lei	1.2	600 Wilcox	Bar	3.8	721 Williamson	WH	2.0	885 Ostenstad	Sou	3.2
339 Sullivan	Wim	2.7	495 Elliott	Lei	1.2	601 Plat	Ar	2.5	722 Hughes	WH	2.0	886 Armstrong	Tot	5.9
340 Watt	Lei	1.6	496 Wright	Liv	3.0	602 Parlour	Ar	2.4	723 Moncur	WH	2.5	887 Iversen	Tot	4.0
341 Poole	Lei	1.5												

Such sets record for endurance

Cricket

HENRY BLOFELD
reports from Colchester
Essex 533-8 dec
Leicestershire 515-9.
Match drawn

Maybe, when Lord MacLaurin has done his best to put English cricket back on course, he could turn his attention to trying to eliminate this sort of match from the general scheme of things. As Essex were one of the sides concerned, he would probably find any scheme blocked by powerful local interests, claiming too much excitement on a fourth day is a bad thing.

Essex had batted on until near the end of the second day, 60 overs having been lost to the weather. Leicestershire's only hope after that was to try to avoid the follow-on and an innings defeat. On an extremely slow pitch they achieved their objective.

It goes without saying that this last day was excruciatingly boring. Peter Such took his tally of overs for the innings to 86, which constituted the largest number of balls ever bowled in a Championship innings, beating the 52-year-old Alfred Shaw's 100.1 five-ball overs for Sussex against Nottinghamshire in 1895. You cannot get much more exciting than that.

At the start, Leicestershire needed 68 more to avoid the follow-on. They soon lost Paul

Nixon to a good low catch at short midwicket by Nasser Hussain off Paul Grayson from a ball which seemed to bounce a fraction more than most. Ben Smith and David Millas then took the score to 397 for 7 by lunch and their stand in all to 139 in 51 overs.

It was all slow-motion cricket, and when Millas was given out caught behind off Jonathan Powell (off-break) – this was Powell's first first-class wicket – they had put on 139 in 51 overs. Smith then came to his hundred before Matthew Brimson was ninth out lbw pushing forward to Grayson.

Fourteen were still needed to avert the follow-on, but as it was

already mid-afternoon that had

already become an academic point. The last pair batted for an hour and a half adding 45 runs, Smith batted for six and a half hours. Such's final figures were 86-49-94 and the Leicestershire innings lasted for 210 overs.

News filtered through from the pavilion during the afternoon that Paul Frith had offered to set Leicestershire a target of 225 to win in 55 overs if they declared their second innings at the interval. The Leicestershire captain, James Whitaker, declined because apparently Iain Sutcliffe (cracked rib) and Neil Johnson (damaged ankle ligaments) would only have batted in an emergency. But then faint hearts never won anything, or deserved to either.

Ben Hollioake takes his last look at schoolboy cricket yesterday. Hollioake, who takes his place with the senior England team on Thursday, scored 59 not out at Southampton in the Under-19 victory against Zimbabwe. Photograph: Peter Jay

Rain foils Kent's contrived finish

ADAM SZCZERET
Worcestershire 422 and 174-3
Kent 276 and 158-4
Match drawn

A thoroughly frustrating day, brought to a close shortly after 3.30pm by rain and bad light, put paid to a match cursed by the weather since the outset. Kent might have gone top had they won, but in a sense the heavens ensured that justice prevailed.

After struggling to avoid the follow-on on Saturday, Kent were offered a contrived finish by the Worcestershire captain, Tom Moody, who clearly felt his bowlers would not have been up to the task had Kent only been batting for a draw.

The joke bowlers provided

Worcestershire with a further 92 runs in the morning, enabling them to set Kent a target of 321 from a minimum of 80 overs. Graeme Hick, 56 not out overnight, did not resume his innings owing to a badly bruised finger.

Kent set off in pursuit and lost Ed Smith at 27, caught high in the gully off Phil Newport. Trevor Ward and Alan Wells then put on 61, but shortly after lunch Ward played on to a well-pitched-up delivery from Mameir Mirza and was out for 52.

Mirza, making his debut, is the 19-year-old brother of Parvez Mirza, the former Worcestershire bowler who died of a heart attack last September aged 24. Mameir Mirza has a smooth action and looks a useful prospect.

Sussex make approach to Warne

Sussex have made a "substantial" one-year offer to Shane Warne for him to be their overseas player next season. The county's chief executive, Tony Pigott, who also revealed that the coach, Desmond Haynes, is to leave the county at the end of the season, say they are expecting an answer from Warne after the Ashes tour.

"A substantial offer has been made to Shane Warne and we are bound to face a bit of competition, but I've had talks with him directly and I am pretty optimistic," Pigott said.

Discussions with Warne were set up through Sussex's former

skipper Tony Greig, who now works in the media in Australia. The West Indian all-rounder Vasbert Drakes is Sussex's current overseas player, but his two-year contract expires at the end of the season.

The role of Haynes, coach for the last two years, has been difficult to define since Pigott took a more hands-on approach in recent weeks. Terms are now being negotiated for a settlement of the final 12-months of the former West Indies captain and opening batsman's contract.

Darren Gough will have

treatment on a sore knee before

the fifth Test against Australia at Trent Bridge. The England seamer was unable to bowl for Yorkshire in their County Championship match against Northamptonshire at Headingley yesterday.

He had a fitness check in the nets and reported some discomfort, and the England physiotherapist, Wayne Morton, who also acts for Yorkshire, is reporting the situation to Lord's. The problem is believed to be inflammation, but Morton said that Gough would report as normal with the rest of the England squad to Trent Bridge today and have further treatment.

CRICKET SCOREBOARD

CRICKET SCOREBOARD									
Falls: 2-68; 3-133; 4-152; 5-174; 6-202; 7-221; 8-233; 9-252; 10-270; 11-288; 12-302; 13-312; 14-322; 15-332; 16-342; 17-352; 18-362; 19-372; 20-382; 21-392; 22-402; 23-412; 24-422; 25-432; 26-442; 27-452; 28-462; 29-472; 30-482; 31-492; 32-502; 33-512; 34-522; 35-532; 36-542; 37-552; 38-562; 39-572; 40-582; 41-592; 42-602; 43-612; 44-622; 45-632; 46-642; 47-652; 48-662; 49-672; 50-682; 51-692; 52-702; 53-712; 54-722; 55-732; 56-742; 57-752; 58-762; 59-772; 60-782; 61-792; 62-802; 63-812; 64-822; 65-832; 66-842; 67-852; 68-862; 69-872; 70-882; 71-892; 72-902; 73-912; 74-922; 75-932; 76-942; 77-952; 78-962; 79-972; 80-982; 81-992; 82-1002; 83-1012; 84-1022; 85-1032; 86-1042; 87-1052; 88-1062; 89-1072; 90-1082; 91-1092; 92-1102; 93-1112; 94-1122; 95-1132; 96-1142; 97-1152; 98-1162; 99-1172; 100-1182; 101-1192; 102-1202; 103-1212; 104-1222; 105-1232; 106-1242; 107-1252; 108-1262; 109-1272; 110-1282; 111-1292; 112-1302; 113-1312; 114-1322; 115-1332; 116-1342; 117-1352; 118-1362; 119-1372; 120-1382; 121-1392; 122-1402; 123-1412; 124-1422; 125-1432; 126-1442; 127-1452; 128-1462; 129-1472; 130-1482; 131-1492; 132-1502; 133-1512; 134-1522; 135-1532; 136-1542; 137-1552; 138-1562; 139-1572; 140-1582; 141-1592; 142-1602; 143-1612; 144-1622; 145-1632; 146-1642; 147-1652; 148-1662; 149-1672; 150-1682; 151-1692; 152-1702; 153-1712; 154-1722; 155-1732; 156-1742; 157-1752; 158-1762; 159-1772; 160-1782; 161-1792; 162-1802; 163-1812; 164-1822; 165-1832; 166-1842; 167-1852; 168-1862; 169-1872; 170-1882; 171-1892; 172-1902; 173-1912; 174-1922; 175-1932; 176-1942; 177-1952; 178-1962; 179-1972; 180-1982; 181-1992; 182-2002; 183-2012; 184-2022; 185-2032; 186-2042; 187-2052; 188-2062; 189-2072; 190-2082; 191-2092; 192-2102; 193-2112; 194-2122; 195-2132; 196-2142; 197-2152; 198-2162; 199-2172; 200-2182; 201-2192; 202-2202; 203-2212; 204-2222; 205-2232; 206-2242; 207-2252; 208-2262; 209-2272; 210-2282; 211-2292; 212-2302; 213-2312; 214-2322; 215-2332; 216-2342; 217-2352; 218-2362; 219-2372; 220-2382; 221-2392; 222-2402; 223-2412; 224-2422; 225-2432; 226-2442; 227-2452; 228-2462; 229-2472; 230-2482; 231-2492; 232-2502; 233-2512; 234-2522; 235-2532; 236-2542; 237-2552; 238-2562; 239-2572; 240-2582; 241-2592; 242-2602; 243-2612; 244-2622; 245-2632; 246-2642; 247-2652; 248-2662; 249-2672; 250-2682; 251-2692; 252-2702; 253-2712; 254-2722; 255-2732; 256-2742; 257-2752; 258-2762; 259-2772; 260-2782; 261-2792; 262-2802; 263-2812; 264-2822; 265-2832; 266-2842; 267-2852; 268-2862; 269-2872; 270-2882; 271-2892; 272-2902; 273-2912; 274-2922; 275-2932; 276-2942; 277-2952; 278-2962; 279-2972; 280-2982; 281-2992; 282-3002; 283-3012; 284-3022; 285-3032; 286-3042; 287-3052; 288-3062; 289-3072; 290-3082; 291-3092; 292-3102; 293-3112; 294-3122; 295-3132; 296-3142; 297-3152; 298-3162; 299-3172; 300-3182; 301-3192; 302-3202; 303-3212; 304-3222; 305-3232; 306-3242; 307-3252; 308-3262; 309-3272; 310-3282; 311-3292; 312-3302; 313-3312; 314-3322; 315-3332; 316-3342; 317-3352; 318-3362; 319-3372; 320-3382; 321-3392; 322-3402; 323-3412; 324-3422; 325-3432; 326-3442; 327-3452; 328-3462; 329-3472; 330-3482; 331-3492; 332-3502; 333-3512; 334-3522; 335-3532; 336-3542; 337-3552; 338-3562; 339-3572; 340-3582; 341-3592; 342-3602; 343-3612; 344-3622; 345-3632; 346-3642; 347-3652; 348-3662; 349-3672; 350-3682; 351-3692; 352-3702; 353-3712; 354-3722; 355-3732; 356-3742; 357-3752; 358-3762; 359-3772; 360-3782; 361-3792; 362-3802; 363-3812; 364-3822; 365-3832; 366-3842; 367-3852; 368-3862; 369-3872; 370-3882; 371-3892; 372-3902; 373-3912; 374-3922; 375-3932; 376-3942; 377-3952; 378-3962; 379-3972; 380-3982; 381-3992; 382-4002; 383-4012; 384-4022; 385-4032; 386-4042; 387-4052; 388-4062; 389-4072; 390-4082; 391-4092; 392-4102; 393-4112; 394-4122; 395-4132; 396-4142; 397-4152; 398-4162; 399-4172; 400-4182; 401-4192; 402-4202; 403-4212; 404-4222; 405-4232; 406-4242; 407-4252; 408-4262; 409-4272; 410-4282; 411-4292; 412-4302; 413-4312; 414-4322; 415-4332; 416-4342; 417-4352; 418-4362; 419-4372; 420-4382; 421-4392; 422-4402; 423-4412; 424-4422; 425-4432; 426-4442; 427-4452; 428-4462; 429-4472; 430-4482; 431-4492; 432-4502; 433-4512; 434-4522; 435-4532; 436-4542; 437-4552; 438-4562; 439-4572; 440-4582; 441-4592; 442-4602; 443-4612; 444-4622; 445-4632; 446-4642; 447-4652; 448-4662; 449-4672; 450-4682; 451-4692; 452-4702; 453-4712; 454-4722; 455-4732; 456-4742; 457-4752; 458-4762; 459-4772; 460-4782; 461-4792; 462-4802; 463-4812; 464-4822; 465-4832; 466-4842; 467-4852; 468-4862; 469-4872; 470-4882; 471-4892; 472-4902; 473-4912; 474-4922; 475-4932; 476-4942; 477-4952; 478-4962; 479-4972; 480-4982; 481-4992; 482-5002; 483-5012; 484-5022; 485-5032; 486-5042; 487-5052; 488-5062; 489-5072; 490-5082; 491-5092; 492-5102; 493-5112; 494-5122; 495-5132; 496-5142; 497-5152; 498-5162; 499-5172; 500-5182; 501-5192; 502-5202; 503-5212; 504-5222; 505-5232; 506-5242; 507-5252; 508-5262; 509-5272; 510-5282; 511-5292;									

Youthful Watson prepares for his senior service

"Tyneside in turmoil before Champions' League debut," screamed one of the morning headlines. Steve Watson could not help the wry smile as he pulled on his boots for training.

The afternoon he became the youngest first-teamer in Newcastle United's history, the Magpies stooped to 19th place in the old Second Division. Their share offer was falling some £1m short of its £8m target and Jim Smith, the old Bald Eagle, was hanging on to the manager's job by his claws.

"Things have changed a bit since then," Watson mused as he scanned the line-up from the November day in 1990 when he made his debut as a 16-year-old substitute at Molineux.

Rather than fretting over the form and fitness of Wayne Ferday, Darren Bradshaw and Scott Sloan and whether the next season would bring trips to Darlington and Hartlepool, turmoil for Newcastle's manager these days means working towards a European Cup tie with the inconvenience of having the world's most expensive player on the injured list.

"The last few seasons we've built up expectations so high."

Watson acknowledged. "And a blow like Alan being injured has rocked everybody because he's the best striker in the country."

Watson would not dispute that Alan Shearer is also the best striker nurtured by Wallsend Boys' Club, although he happens to be one himself.

It was as a centre-forward that he joined Newcastle on YTS forms and his curriculum vitae includes not so much leading the line as being the line in a European tie. "The lone forager," he recalled of his role as Andy Cole's emergency stand-in in the Basque cauldron of Athletic Bilbao's San Mamés stadium three years ago.

"Actually," Watson said. "I was a goalkeeper with the Wallsend district team at school. I can remember we got hampered by Newcastle schools in one game. They had Robbie Elliott and Lee Clark in their side."

He was a centre-forward when I signed for Newcastle United but I didn't play many games for the youth team up front. They played me at centre-half virtually straight away and six years and about eight different positions later. I've ended up at centre-half again. I really do enjoy playing there. I felt very comfortable there at the end of last season.

Simon Turnbull talks to Newcastle's long-serving defender who believes the picture at St James' Park is not as black and white as it is painted

and won his 12 England Under-21 caps as a right-back. He has, in fact, played in every outfield position for his home club. And there are those in the Newcastle dressing-room who reckon he qualifies as having kept goal too, citing a diving save that stopped a Tony Dorigo shot but conceded a penalty to Leeds at St James' three years ago.

"Actually," Watson said. "I was a goalkeeper with the Wallsend district team at school. I can remember we got hampered by Newcastle schools in one game. They had Robbie Elliott and Lee Clark in their side."

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Watson's form at the heart of a tormented suspect defence was a notable feature of the unbeaten 10-game run to the end of last season which qualified Newcastle as England's number-one representatives in Europe's Champions' Cup.

While two long-serving Geordie likely lads, Elliott and Clark, have made way for new recruits, Watson has been rewarded with a four-year contract that will take his senior service up to the 10-year mark – and entitle him to a testimonial – before his 27th birthday.

Such a scenario seemed unlikely in the extreme in the early days of his working life under his third manager, Kevin Kee-

gan's opinion of him turned full circle in the 90 minutes of a home match against Tranmere in April 1992.

"I said to Stevie in the dressing-room: 'You're playing full-back against Pat Nevin today,'" Keegan recalled. "Just show him inside because he'll want to go outside you."

"After five minutes he just let Nevin go inside him, Nevin crossed the ball and they were 1-0 up. After 10 minutes he did the same thing. He thought I meant let him go outside rather than just make him try to go inside instead of down the wing."

"We came in 2-1 down at half-time and I said to him: 'Get your boots off. Get in the shower. You'll never play full-back for me again.'

"He went in the shower and the physio came to me and said someone was injured. So I went in the shower and said: 'Right, come on, get your boots on. Get back out and play.' Stevie just said: 'Great.' He put his boots back on and went out and played like a full-back."

Keegan came to value Watson's talent, and to utilise his remarkable versatility to the full. "A very mature player and a

great athlete," was the ultimate Keegan verdict. "I never saw Duncan Edwards play, but people in the game keep telling me he reminds them of him."

Dalglish was so struck by Watson's maturity the first time he saw him in action – on a scouting trip to watch Brighton, Liverpool's forthcoming FA Cup opponents, in January 1991 – he laughed at those who insisted the midfielder running the show was a 16-year-old trainee.

Six years later, Dalglish has a man's job in mind for the experienced pro who earned £29 a week for his child-star duties, which included cleaning the boots of Archie Gourlay and Neil Simpson.

A new batch of recruits have arrived to fight for first-team places, and Jon Dahl Tomasson, Iemur Keita, Shay Given, Stuart Pearce and Alessandro Pistone may all have opening-day roles against Sheffield Wednesday on Wednesday at St James' Park on Saturday.

Dalglish, though, is likely to find defensive room to accommodate the old hand who wore the Wallsend No 9 shirt after Shearer. "I am just looking for-



Steve Watson gathers his thoughts as Newcastle are knocked out of last season's UEFA Cup. Photograph: Empics

qualifying games for a start. That's got to make it as exciting a season as we've had since I've been here."

More exciting, certainly, than heading towards Hartlepool with Ferday and the rest of those low-flying Magpies.

New goal for Davenport on 99 not out

Phil Shaw meets the one-cap wonder who, at 36, is now player-coach at the League's latest recruits, Macclesfield, where he has a score to settle

led. "When I got that last goal there was a lot of publicity about my being on the brink of a hundred. Stockport had three games left and Dave Jones [the manager, now with Southampton] told me: 'Don't worry, you'll get your chance to do it. He never played me again.'

Macclesfield's promotion from the Vauxhall Conference has given Davenport more than an opportunity to reach a personal milestone. The purist style of Sammy McIlroy's side has restored his appetite for the fray. He sounds 36 going on 18, his enthusiasm as great as at any time since his heyday with Nottingham Forest and Manchester United.

Four years have elapsed since Davenport advanced to 98 with Sunderland; a further 28 months since a single took him on to 99 during a loan stint with Stockport. Even Geoffrey Boycott never edged towards three figures so cautiously.

"It's been as if the captain declared the innings with me on 99 not out," Davenport chuck-

Davenport's promise was immense. Blessed with deft control and a talent for turning defenders – as viewers of *Match of the Eighties* saw last week – he was initially rated on a par with Gary Lineker. And when Mark Hughes left Old Trafford for Barcelona, he was the replacement.

He was still with Forest when Bobby Robson picked him for the squad to play the Republic of Ireland at Wembley in 1985. "It was two days after my birthday," Davenport recalled. "Not long after I got on as substitute, Mick McCarthy tried to clear the ball and it broke to me in the inside-right channel.

"I squared it for Lineker to chip it over Packie Bonner. That was his first goal for England. The rest is history. Go on Gary, make yourself a million while I just go and play for Airdrie and Southport!"

While the tone is self-mocking rather than self-pitying, misfortune would play a part in Davenport's status as a one-cap wonder. A week later a hamstring injury forced him out of the impending World Cup qualifier in Romania. He never did wear the pin-striped summer tour suit for which the FA had him measured.

Fate seemed to have switched sides when, the following year, Ron Atkinson paid £575,000 to take him to United, where McIlroy had been among his adolescent heroes. Within six months, however, Alex Ferguson took over and re-signed Hughes.

Davenport went on to play for Middlesbrough and Sunderland before circumstances led him to Scotland. "I decided to find a club where they didn't have so many overnight stops. My boy had just been



...this is now: Davenport, in the Third Division with Macclesfield, has a personal milestone to pass

Photograph: Peter Jay

born, yet every other Friday, at 5pm, I'd be sat in the Sunderland coach in a traffic jam on the A1 at Wetherby."

Spells with Airdrieonians and St Johnstone allowed him to see more of his family – "we hardly ever played anyone more than an hour away from our home in Edinburgh" – but Davenport felt he had unfinished business south of the border.

After a permanent move to Stockport fell through, he joined Southport. He was the Conference club's assistant manager, only to be overlooked when the senior post became vacant. Having told the chairman he did not want to go back to being just a player, he was released.

"More importantly, he always played the right way. He'd place a ball in the middle of the room and say: 'That's precious, look after it, don't give it away.'

"Sammy's not as outspoken

"I was thinking of packing it in because I wasn't enjoying my football. Then Sammy came in for me and I realised I'd landed on my feet. I thought: 'This is fantastic – I want to go on playing as long as I can.'

Macclesfield took the championship playing the type of football Davenport was schooled in. He was fortunate to have played for some good managers. I rate Brian Clough as the best – his management was second to none. The way he used psychology was incredible.

"More importantly, he always played the right way. He'd place a ball in the middle of the room and say: 'That's precious, look after it, don't give it away.'

– few people are – but his values are the same. It's pass and move, starting from a solid back four, like it was at Forest. When we get possession we

as out of a reluctance to tempt fate. "Nobody knows how we'll cope with the physical demands, though we've got players who'll surprise people with their quality."

For instance? "Neil Sorvel in midfield. Crewe let him go but he's a superb passer. Steve Payne and Neil Howarth are excellent centre-backs. Then there's Steve Wood, our top scorer, who could become the oldest man to make his League debut – at 34."

Wood has given up his job as a JCB driver to go full-time. McIlroy's small squad, recruited on a shoestring, also includes a recently retired postman, life-guard and gardener. Davenport, who will continue studying for a sports science degree at

Manchester University, was delighted to commit himself to a first-ever campaign at Third Division level.

That has meant the kind of pre-season regime he thought was behind him, and which is now his responsibility. "Training's been very enjoyable, honestly," he said. "The spirit at Macclesfield is fantastic. Three years ago they won the title and weren't allowed into the League. It's mostly the same lads, so there's a real feeling of 'let's make it count this time'."

Talking of counting, Davenport is confident of troubling the scorers in the coming weeks. He will not, it is safe to assume, be unduly concerned if the elusive goal is not quite *Match of the Nineties* material.

That was then... Peter Davenport makes his only appearance for England, in 1985. Photograph: Colorsport

Most clubs are having to look at innovative strategies to lure fans brainwashed into believing life is only good at the top

Ask a salesman for his vision of Utopia and he is sure to reply along these lines: give me a product that no one else can offer, that everybody wants, at a price affordable to all.

In post-war Britain in the late Forties and Fifties, professional football was such a product. It monopolised Saturday afternoon entertainment. Capacity crowds packed sardine-like on vast open terraces week after week after week. Perceived to be good value for money, the masses did not appear unduly worried by the poor facilities and the cramped confines of their temporary living quarters. After all, hadn't watching football always been like this?

In far more comfortable surroundings – the padded-seat luxury of the directors' box – the privileged few counted their coins. Football admission could hardly have been deemed expensive, (the mass audience were, after all, the workers) but, in an era when the players earned peanuts in relation

to the receipts amassed, it must have been halcyon days for your average, extremely rich football director.

For men of vision, this surely had to be the opportune time to reinvest the excess. Antiquated stadiums, so desperately in need of modernisation on the grounds of both improved comfort and safety, were largely left to crumble. Implementing a pricing policy that rewarded the loyalty of the fans by pegging prices was overlooked in favour of a relentless series of unnecessary and downright greedy admission hikes.

Blinded by pound signs, the money men failed to see the arrival of the opposition. Living standards were rising, so too were people's expectations. Shops were, by now, stacked with attractive goods. People buying a car for the first time could, come the weekend, spread their wings and explore the countryside.

Television, now within the budget of the working classes, accounted for a high percentage of stayaway fans

who preferred, instead, the comfort of their own homes and the novelty of an afternoon devoted to a whole variety of televised sports.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, the crowds started to drift away. A trick became a flood as football lost its mass appeal. Wringing their hands, the directors attempted to make good the shortfall with even greater price increases.

Crowds continued their downward plunge through the hooligan-ravaged Sixties, Seventies and early Eighties, with the game's lowest ebb being reached in the quite appalling wake of the triple tragedies of Bradford, Brussels and Hillsborough. Hand-wringing time again as the authorities looked to the heavens for some divine intervention.

Winging in to answer their prayers was Sky supremo Rupert Murdoch. By toe-pulling a multi-million pot of gold towards the desperate and the needy, Murdoch has in all probability contributed

to the big time. When you are down amongst the dead men, being innovative with your pricing policy is tantamount to committing financial suicide. Just ask the former Torquay chairman, Mike Bateson.

He came to the painful, inevitable conclusion that regardless of price-promotions – two tickets for one, kids for a quid, child season tickets for a tenner – the base for increasing support sufficiently to make ends meet just was not there. He then had the unenviable task of asking perhaps the most loyal couple of thousand fans in the country to cough up an extra £2 a match for the privilege of watching what was, at that particular time, the worst team in the country.

Swindon Town have, once again, implemented a price increase this season. Should they, however, fail to make the play-offs, season-ticket holders will be refunded the cost of the increase. These two clubs do have the added saleability asset of proxim-

Murdoch's £60,000 a year donation doesn't nearly begin to offset the loss.

For Torquay read the vast majority of Nationwide League clubs. As demand grows for the best seats in the Premiership house, the little leaguers are left to ponder how best they can survive.

A drastic price reduction may be the answer, but such has been the effectiveness of Murdoch's marketing strategy, there is still no guarantee that this will be enough to tempt those hooked on his sporting satellite show to watch live football again.

As the recently unemployed salesman said: "You're only as good as the product you sell." Especially when it's vastly over-priced. Head the warning, Premiership clubs. Or have we already reached the stage where the fans are no longer as important as the television income, in ensuring that our game – the people's game – will endure.

99 and not out
Peter Davenport, Macclesfield's target man, talks to Phil Shaw, page 22

sport

Newcastle's old boy
Steve Howey talks to Simon Turnbull, page 22

WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIP: Heptathlete's best not enough to beat German as there is disappointment for Hansen

Lewis has to settle for a silver medal

MIKE ROWBOTTOM
reports from Athens

Denise Lewis last night won the first medal of the World Championships for Great Britain as she took silver in the heptathlon behind the favourite, Sabina Braun of Germany.

Lewis, who finished with a total of 6,654 points, put in a performance that had scarcely any weak links, doing justice to a talent which brought her the Olympic bronze medal in Atlanta last summer.

In the absence of the injured defending champion, Ghada Shouaa, it appeared that Lewis, who broke her Commonwealth record earlier this year, had a chance of gold. Unfortunately for her, the 32-year-old from Essex produced the performance of her life to win with 6,739 points.

Ashta Hansen, who reached yesterday's triple-jump championship amid rising British hopes of a first championship medal, was unable to rise to the occasion. Hansen, who headed the qualifying with a leap of 14.77 metres, had had preparations for Athens disrupted by a back injury which affected her ability to sprint.

Her performance on Saturday left her in some pain and she received immediate physiotherapy. But the competition last night appeared to reveal that the 33-year-old was still hampered. With her sixth and final attempt on the night, she stood fifth after a competition in which several of her rivals had surpassed themselves.

In a vain attempt to raise herself, she encouraged the crowd to clap. But the effort was in vain. Her distance was 14.49m – her best on the night, but not enough to lift her in the placings.

As she shook hands with her opponents, a wry smile came to her face. She had simply not been able to raise her level of



High hopes: Britain's Dalton Grant sails over the bar, on his way to the qualifying for the final of high jump in Athens yesterday

Photograph: Mike Powell/Allsport

performance like several of those around her.

Hansen had been hoping for a progression, having finished fourth at last summer's Olympic Games and then taken the silver medal at the World Indoor

Championships in March. The hop and the step were promising, but the jump proved too much. Hansen's coach, Aston Moore, had said beforehand that Hansen's confidence – something which has let her

down in more than one major championship – was now strong. "She feels like she belongs with the top jumpers now," he said. She did not look out of place yesterday but was clearly operating well below peak

efficiency. As she had feared beforehand, Romania's Rodica Mateescu, whom she had referred to as "the dark horse", had come through strongly as a gold medal challenger, adding two centimetres to her

world best of the year when she managed 15.16m on her first attempt. It looked enough for the gold medal, but Sárka Kasparová surpassed with her fifth jump, reaching out to 15.20.

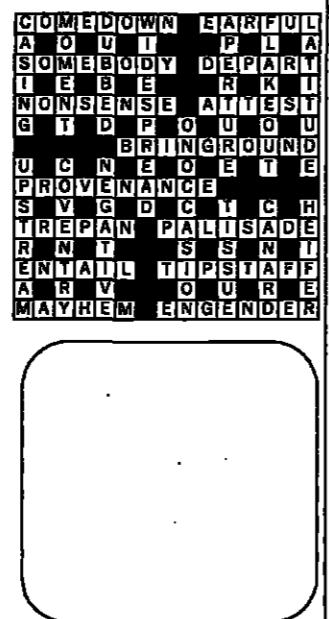
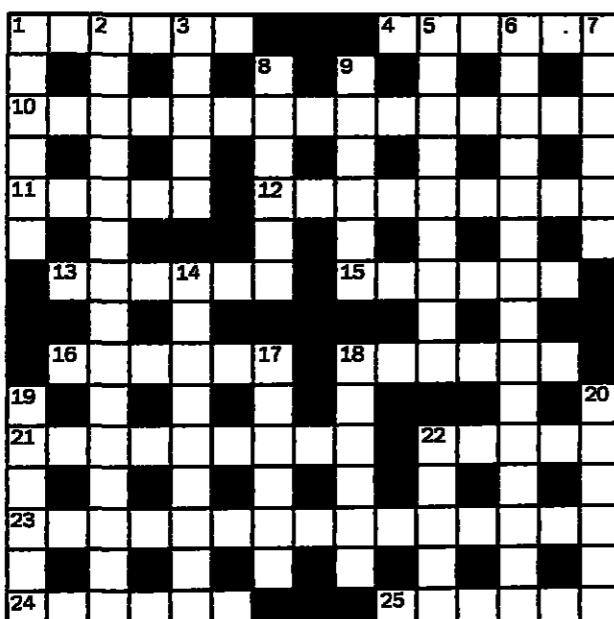
There was further disappointment for Britain on the night as Steve Smith, the Olympic bronze medalist, failed to qualify for the high jump final. Smith, who has been troubled by an Achilles

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3369 Tuesday 5 August

By Asred

Monday's Solution



ACROSS
1 Reel, being cut with lots of wine? (6)
4 About to teach in place of prestige (6)
10 Prisons for those of European descent? (5,5)
11 Going through books of car firm takes time (5)
12 More to pay when up on French indictment? (9)
13 Ill-tempered, having to put on second diaper (6)
15 Greek island's short of food (6)
16 What you'll have to pay to get into work over a pretentious type? (6)
18 Free cleaner given to worker (6)
21 Count Bari out as a place where growth is encouraged (9)

22 Sign of industry on article which is bound to err? (5)
23 Not generally showing a lack of levity? (8,7)
24 Disruption in spring month at border (6)
25 Decree changes and decline (6)

DOWN
1 Archer has to show respect at place where Douglas is found (6)
2 Mutual organisation is edifying everybody? (8,7)
3 Useless in English and another school subject (5)
5 Free house local, could be in charge of such drink (9)
6 As a rule you might have expected to find saints here? (4,5,6)
7 Wasting asset's given liberal sort of decoration (6)
8 Go by jumbo eating tree which could be tasteless (6)
9 Male gets sweet-smelling thing for old car (6)
14 Fruit's British, a supermarket stock which goes down perfectly (5,4)
17 Get in boat which is decrepit (6)
18 See Irish have a try to get fierce woman (6)
19 Stupid amount to spend on Chinese dish (3,3)
20 In frenzy, merely a thing to speed up reaction (6)
22 Make strenuous effort for endless bliss (5)

Morceli made to work for place

Noureddine Morceli, bidding for a fourth successive world 1500m title, was made to work hard before winning his semi-final on the third day of the World Championships yesterday.

Morceli, the world record holder and Olympic champion, could not afford to relax as the Spaniards Reyes Estevez and the former Olympic champion Fermín Cacho controlled the race from the front until the last few metres when Morceli took the lead.

The Algerian, who was never out of the leading pack, won in 3min 38.82sec ahead of Cacho and Estevez, who both clocked 3:38.86.

Morceli's main rival for the title, Morocco's Hicham El Guerrouj, came through his

semi-final a few minutes earlier, but had a comparatively less severe test, winning in 3:38.92 to set up a fascinating duel in tomorrow's final.

El Guerrouj, who has run four of the five fastest times of the year, will be especially keen to win the world crown for the first time after his Olympic hopes ended in last year's final in Atlanta when he fell.

Kenya's Laban Rotich, the second fastest man in the world this year, also looked in good form and qualified comfortably in 3:38.92.

Sonia O'Sullivan aims to complete the first leg of a World Championship double knowing that fortune finally looks to be turning in her favour.

A year ago, O'Sullivan was struck down by a debilitating bug which left her a pale shadow of the runner who had dominated the world all season.

Instead of leaving Atlanta with the anticipated golden haul, she departed the United States in tears, forced to drop out of the 5,000m final and not even getting through the first round of the 1500m.

Those problems seemed to continue into this year as she left Sheffield's Don Valley Stadium in June after finishing so far behind Britain's Kelly Holmes in the 1500m that she was virtually written off.

But, six weeks later, the 27-year-old from Cobh, whose main aim when she flew out to Athens was defending her Gothenburg

5,000m crown, is now favourite for today's 1500m final.

First, Holmes, the world No 1, crashed out with an Achilles problem, then defending champion Hassiba Boulmerka of Algeria failed to show for her heat and on Sunday the Olympic gold medallist Svetlana Masterkova also succumbed to her injury problems.

O'Sullivan had singled out Holmes and Masterkova as her two main rivals, and after dropping the minimum possible so far, she now has a confident aura.

"I think I've proved my fitness now and I've not got down to my last training session yet," said O'Sullivan, who ran her fastest race of the season in the semi-final, despite lying 10th with 400m to go.

Her main threats are likely to be American Regina Jacobs and Russia's Olga Nelyubova. But the acceleration O'Sullivan showed in moving through almost the entire field in the space of 150m before settling for a gentle finish will have been noted by her rivals and if the race is run slowly, that speed could be crucial.

"Hopefully things will work out. I've had a day off today and we'll see how it goes from here," O'Sullivan said. "The good thing is so far that I haven't really been nervous at all and if I can stay relaxed, it will help."

"All I want to do is run my best possible race and take it from there. I've worked hard all year and now I'm here I'm going to make the most of it."

Britain's 400m trio set up historic final

Britain will have three 400m runners in a global final for the first time in history tonight; but the No 1 of the trio, Iwan Thomas, appears to be increasingly hampered by a knee problem.

Thomas, Mark Richardson and Jamie Baulch formed a block booking after coming safely through their semi-finals. However, Thomas, who was being thought of as a potential champion here before Michael Johnson's arrival on a wild card,

walked heavily away after finishing fourth, and spent much time frowning and stretching before leaving without comment. Britain's record holder has been complaining for several days of a niggling injury behind his right knee. Having said that, he ran 44.61sec, which made him the fastest Briton. His race was won by Johnson, who quelled some of the doubts that his previous day's absent-minded performance had raised by running 44.37 with apparent ease.

He paid tribute to his trainer, Mark Zambada, who has been working on his leg. "I wouldn't be running here if it wasn't for him," Richardson said. "He's an amazing guy. I'm not letting the injury affect me. If it's going to go, it's going to go."

Baulch, who as far as anyone knows is not suffering from either illness or injury, spoke to his coach, Linford Christie, afterwards. "I didn't really go for it in the first 200 metres," he said. "I was just telling myself 'You are The Man'."

Today will tell. But the man whom most expect to be The Man, Johnson, provided a more reassuring show after finishing

A Middlesex batsmen and wicket-keeper, David has progressed through the NatWest Development of Excellence to represent the NatWest England Under 19 side against Pakistan and New Zealand. In achieving a high score of 98 not out, 26 catches and 2 stumpings, he's obviously a good man to have behind you. Unless, of course, you're batman.

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